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The Alberta New Democratic Party: Survival Without Success

by

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University of Alberta

A THESIS
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Abstract

The Alberta New Democratic Party has been a major disappointment to many of its supporters. It has never elected more than two members to the Alberta legislature, and throughout the 1970s was represented only by Grant Notley, the leader of the party. This situation is in rather stark contrast to the political conditions that exist for the party in the other three western provinces, where currently the NDP forms the government in Manitoba and is the official opposition in British Columbia and Saskatchewan.

A number of scholars have argued that this failure to achieve greater electoral success is simply the result of the party's inability to take advantage of its opportunities. However, this thesis will argue that there are a number of factors inherent in the party which have set it apart from the overwhelming majority of the electorate and this has directly contributed to its limited base of support.

Throughout much of its history Alberta has been a predominantly rural and agriculturally-based province with the individual commodity-producer as the basic unit of prodction. Many of these people held strong religious beliefs and were strident advocates of the free-enterprise system, the latter point is still very true. These factors made support for a political party that espoused a collectivist and socialist ideology somewhat problematic.

With increased urbanization and unionization of the work force one could speculate that political circumstances for the NDP should be improving, however a major study conducted after the 1971 provincial election pointed to the fact that trade unionists share many of the political attitudes of the general population, which remains relatively right-wing.

This thesis argues that the leftist ideological orientation of the Alberta New Democratic Party as demonstrated over two decades in the party programs and policy positions is antithetical to many of the socio-political attitudes held by the majority of the Alberta electorate.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction to the Problem Under Consideration

The electoral history of the provincial Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) and later the New Democratic Party (NDP) in Alberta has largely been one of frustration. The party has managed to survive without electoral success, it has never received more than 25% of the popular vote or elected more than two members to the Alberta legislature. Using political culture as the basis for the conceptual framework, this study will analyse reasons why the Alberta New Democratic Party has achieved so little success in its attempt to attract Alberta voters.

Justification for the Study

The NDP has done very well electorally in every province in Western Canada with the notable exception of Alberta. This anomaly continues to be very evident in analyses of Canadian provincial politics, particularly given the overt similarities in economic and social development of the prairies. An examination of a number of the factors that have contributed to the lack of the Alberta NDP's success will hopefully contribute to a better understanding of the complexity of achieving electoral victory for a party that is seen to represent the "left" in a province where the political culture still primarily supports individualism and free enterprise.

Conceptual Framework

> Canadian politics is regional politics; regionalism is one of the pre-eminent facts of Canadian life. The concept of regionalism has been given a wide range of different meanings in the study of Canadian politics. It has been used to refer to differences in social and economic characteristics, such as economic bases, levels of income and religious and ethnic makeup.[1]

A number of studies have been undertaken for the purpose of examining the differences in the political culture of one region of Canada as compared to another. For the purpose of this study the province will be used as the unit of analysis. John Wilson [2] does so, arguing that the easy division of Canada into French and English misses the more subtle variations. "No one would deny for example, that there are important differences in political practice within English Canada, even if they do not always seem to match the grand contrasts between the two founding cultures.[3] These differences have however persisted over a long period and while they could be dismissed as little more than variations in the "rules of the political game" from one part of English Canada to another, they may nonetheless reflect the existence of more profound differences in the attitudes and orientations directed towards the political system. Simeon and Elkin [4] also used provinces as units of analysis and found that there were strong differences among the citizens of Canadian provinces in regard to some basic orientations to politics particularly in regard to political efficacy and trust. However they were very unequivocal in stating that scholars must be exceedingly careful in generalizing about "Canadian" attitudes and beliefs. [5] They argue that a complete picture of regionalism and political culture will require much more detailed study on a province by province basis. These scholars accept the province as a meaningful unit of regional/provincial culture thus the province of Alberta rather than a wider unit will be used as a framework for this analysis.

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[1] Richard Simeon and David Elkins "Provincial Political Cultures in Canada" in Small Worlds: Provinces and Parties in Canadian Political Life Toronto:Methuen, 1980. Pages 31 - 75.

[2] J. Wilson "The Canadian Political Culture: Towards A Redefinition of the Nature of the Canadian Political System" in Canadian Journal of Political Science 1974. Pages 438 - 483.

[3] Ibid Page 465.

Richard Simeon and David Elkins hypothesize that one component of the regional differeniation in Canadian politics is something they refer to as "regional political cultures". [6] The term is defined as basically differences in history, patterns of settlement, ethnic composition and societal institutions that have contributed to the development of unique attitudes and orientations to politics on a regional and provincial level. Their study demonstrated that there are strong differences among the citizens of Canadian provinces in terms of basic orientations to politics. This was especially true in regards to political efficacy and political trust. They found that 95% of the respondents from Alberta either came out medium or low on the scale set up to measure political trust.[7] Similar results were found when responses to questions of political efficacy were analysed. The issue of political efficacy is particularly relevant given the participatory nature of the Alberta NDP. Relatively few Albertans actively participate in political affairs; even if the NDP does attract a large proportion of these individuals the numbers would still be very small when compared to the total electorate. Again because of its participatory nature the NDP is not likely to get a large share of the non-participants. [8]

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[4] R. Simeon and D. Elkin Op cit. Page 15.
[5] Ibid Page 436.
[6] Ibid Page 32.

The basic hypothesis of this thesis is that the political culture of Alberta has historically predisposed a substantial segment of the electorate to support the political right. There is little question that the 1921 sweep by the United Farmers of Alberta does suggest that during disastrous socio-economic conditions and strong feelings of alienation and resentment toward established party politics, Alberta has the potential for support of "radical" political alternatives. Not-withstanding the UFA example, Alberta's political history has been notable for its consistent support of "conservative" political parties, and thoroughly so since the oil finds of 1947, predating the founding of the NDP. Through an examination of various aspects of the province's political culture it will be demonstrated that the basic ideological raison d'etre of the Alberta New Democratic Party has been consistently in conflict with the mainstream of political opinion.

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[7] The question that was asked was "to what extent do citizens feel government and politicians to be competent, concerned for and interested in their welfare.?" Ibid Page 44.

[8] The typology used by Simeon and Elkins was operationalized by dichotomizing the trust and efficacy scales, then relating them to each other. They found a significant association between the two dimensions. The Pearson correlation was highest for Alberta at .47. Ibid Pages 40 -45.

Political culture has been defined in a number of ways, the differences being the result of how one defines culture. Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba's definition refers to the specifically political orientation - "attitudes towards the political system and its various parts, and attitudes towards the role of self in the system." [9] The key word in their definition is "orientation" and the authors make it clear that the meaning they assign to culture in this context is largely psychological.[10]

Verba's later definition of political culture is somewhat more removed from this purely psychological orientation. He argues that political culture is the "system of empirical beliefs, expressive symbols and values which defines the situation in which political action takes place."[11]Lucian Pye adds that this definition "encompasses both the political ideals and the operating norms of a polity because it is the product of both the collective history of the political system and the life histories of the individuals who comprise the system. These life histories are revealed both in public events and private experiences."[12] Samuel Beer [13] used the concept political culture to designate the conscious psychological patterns of a culture as one causal or contributing factor in the explanation of political behavior. The principal components of political culture as he sees it are values, beliefs, and emotional attitudes.[14] For many of the "traditional" writers on political culture the concept may be summarized by the following definition, "it is a set of attitudes, sentiments and cognitions that inform and govern political behavior in any society. [15] This definition neither stresses nor deemphasizes the role of such aspects of political culture as societal role perception or general orientation to the collectivity. This school of thought has been challenged for its emphasis on the psychological orientation of the individual at the expense of dealing with systemic factors.

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[9] Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba The Civic Culture Boston:Little Brown and Company, 1963. Page 12.
[10] Ibid Page [illegible]

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[11] Lucian PYe and Sidney Verba Political Culture and Political Development Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965. Page 513.
[12] Ibid Page 8.
[13] Samuel Beer et al. Patterns of Government New York:Random House, 1958. Page 12.
[14] Ibid. For further definitions of political culture along this line see Donald Devine The Political Culture of the United States Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1972.
[15] Lucian Pye and Sidney Verba Op cit. Page 7.

The "modern" writers by and large "take a more functional-behavioral approach" to the study of political culture. Nettl, for example, defines political culture as the "conducting element of action". [16] As the authors of this school point out, the more behavior oriented approach does not negate nor overlook the psychological forces influencing the individual, in fact it can be argued that they are more concerned with the development of attitudes and beliefs. The fundamental difference is that they start from a position that looks to explain cultural change, thus putting more stress on the means whereby different orientations may come about.

Essentially, political culture has been looked at in two general ways depending upon the level at which the study of political life takes place. If one is interested in concentrating on the individual, political culture has a predominantly psychological focus as represented, for example, by Almond and Verba's work. Using this approach one is basically attempting to "discern the important ways in which a person is subjectively oriented toward the essential elements in the political system."[17] We are interested in how the individual feels about the symbols, institutions and rules that makeup the fundamental political order of his society and how he responds to them.

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[16] Ibid Page 27.

[17] Lucian Pye and Sidney Verba Op cit. Page 7 - 10.

The second general definition emphasizes the collective orientation of people toward the basic elements in their political system. This is a "systems level" approach. We are interested in how large masses of citizens evaluate their political institutions. When political culture is discussed from this perspective it refers to the political orientations across the whole system.

The concept political culture offers an intellectual link between individual behavior and the performance of the political system because it attempts to relate the general to the specific.

> The bond between system performance and mass political orientations is not a fact but rather a working hypothesis that spurs investigators to test its validity; the incentive is that the results should they show a strong link between political culture and political system performance would provide an enormous payoff.[18]

The term political culture will be used in the context of this analysis to refer to a "society's system of empirical beliefs, expressive symbols and values which defines the situation in which political action takes place.[19] The emphasis on political culture does not mean to imply that other aspects of the political system are not important. The concept does however facilitate the separation of the socio-cultural ' aspects of politics from others, and to subject it to more detailed and systematic analysis. The process whereby one delineates more precisely the role of political culture puts one in the position of being able to see more clearly what impact it has on the political system.[20] A related issue is, under what conditions does political culture remain relatively stable and when does it change, and what role do the ideological predispostion of the individuals in the society play in supporting the conduct of the political system? These types of enquiries must be answered if one is to understand adequately why the Alberta New Democratic Party has failed to achieve greater success. For this reason, a political culture framework will be used as the basis for analysis.

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[18] Thomas J. Cook and F. Scioli "Political Socialization Research in the United States: A Review" in D. Nimmo and C. Banjean ed. Political Attitudes and Public Opinion New York: D. McKay, 1972. Pages 154 - 164.

[19] L. Pye and S. Verba Political Culture and Political Development Princeton:Princeton University Press, 1969.

The question is, how does political culture develop? In the case of Alberta, the province has "enjoyed" a relatively long history of political order and continuity in its political institutions. One could argue that there must be some considerable stability within its political culture and this has obvious implications for specific elements with the Alberta political system, namely its political parties.

In order to examine the concept of political culture more clearly it is necessary to set out the important formative influences that shape it. There is clearly no universal agreement about which factors are essential when one looks at the role of political culture and its development, however the four general areas set out by

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[20] Ibid Page 515.

Rosenbaum [21] are considered to be representative.

1. Political Socialization

> Political socialization refers to the process whereby the individual learns his political values, attitudes, beliefs and behavior.[22]

There is basic agreement among most scholars studying political culture that a person's political orientations are dramatically shaped by the individuals and institutions that play a large role in the person's life. Home, school, church, peer group clearly affect how the individual views his environment, and the political system is not excluded from this influence. Individuals "learn" about politics throughout their lives. In terms of what role political socialization does play in the development and manifestation of political culture, a number of issues become important to consider. For example, what institutions and organizations affect most actively the individual's socialization to the political system, and what is the content of the messages communicated to the individual about the political system?

> In political systems with considerable continuity of governmental institutions and stable civic process, political socialization is most likely to be a conservative process, initiating new generations into the political

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[21] W. Rosenbaum Political Culture Great Britain:Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1975.
[22] D. Jaros Socialization to Politics New York:Praeger Publications, 1975.

values and behaviors of the ongoing system.[23] It is reasonable to assert that the continuing stability of a political system is largely dependent upon the ability of the socialization process to perform this conserving function.

2. Historical Experience [24]

Another general category of factors that affect individual orientation toward political systems are those historical events and experiences that have a marked influence. Because acquistion of values and beliefs about the political process is a learning experience, one would naturally expect that an individual's political views and behaviors would respond in some way to the critical historical events and institutions with which he has been involved with. [25] Naturally not all historical events are related to the study of political culture, however there are clearly some which affect the basic orientation of the individual. The events most likely to affect a polity's political culture are those that involve great numbers of people directly and profoundly. Wars, depression, dramatic social and technological change are but a few examples of events that can be seen to either support the existing political regime or act as an impetus for change.

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[23] W. Rosenbaum Political Culture Op cit. Page 15.
[24] Ibid Page 18.
[25] Ibid Pages 15 17.

3. Socio-Economic Variables [26]

Variations among socio-economic groups within a political system tend to include significantly different patterns of political culture. Equally, a high degree of homogeneity in terms of socio-economic status tends to reduce the variation in the pattern of the political culture. Almost any socio-economic characteristic may be associated with differences within a society. The ones that are most often referred to include race, occupation, family background, educational level, and income. There are obviously many reasons why socio-economic factors are frequently associated with variations in political orientation. Political status is often largely determined by social status; those individuals who share a similar social standing are more likely to share similar views about politics than those who do not. Those individuals or groups who are benefitting from the existing status quo will feel more attracted to the dominant institutions and values than those members who are somehow suffering because of them. If the individual sees his social and economic standing being negatively influenced by a change in political institutions, it is highly unlikely that he will support such change.[27]

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[26] Ibid Page 18

4. Political Variables

In many political systems political parties play a major role in shaping mass political orientations.[28] In most western democracies the dominant political parties share a basic agreement on the "rules and regulations" that are to be followed in the conduct of political affairs. However, pronounced differences in party program do manifest themselves and have a substantial impact.

> Parties which represent regional, social, religious or other interests which are sharply at variance with the dominant regimes may well be socializing values into a very different cultural orientation from those found in other parties.[29]

The argument that political culture per se is an important influence on the development of political attitudes and behavior is not very informative, but the demonstration of what components of political culture influence what political orientations is crucial. One of the basic tenets of this analysis is that political culture does form a crucial link between the actual events that take place in the political arena and the action of people in reaction to political events.

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[27] Ibid Page 19.
[28] Ibid Page 20.
[29] Ibid Page 23.

> Although the political behavior of individuals and groups is of course effected by the acts of governments, officials ,wars, election campaigns and the like, it is even more affected by the meanings that are assigned to those events.[30]

Similarly, political ideologies are affected by the cultural milieu into which they are introduced. How the individual selectively perceives the ideological orientation of a party is largely determined by the values and attitudes that the person has developed. This is where the influence of the political culture is clearly evident.

The four general categories set out in Rosenbaum's typology on political culture provide a thorough and systematic basis from which to organize this analysis.

The political socializing agents and historical events that have had a marked impact on the development of Alberta's political culture will be examined first. Specifically I will deal with the effect of the large numbers of peoples who settled in Alberta during the early decades of the twentieth century and their contribution to the development of the political culture that dominated the province up until World War II. I will also examine the influence of the traditional fundamentalist socio-religious orientation of much of the population on the conduct of Alberta politics.

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[30] Ibid Page 571.

Finally, the impact of the changing economic makeup of the province after the discovery of massive oil reserves will be analysed in order to support the argument that the political environment of the province became increasingly conservative as Alberta prospered.

The role political parties play in shaping mass political orientations will be dealt with by analysing the strategies and issues the NDP has chosen to highlight in a series of election campaigns. This will be done in order to point out the fact that the NDP has been rather unique in terms of its ideological orientation when compared to other contemporary political parties in the province.

The question as to what impact socio-economic variables have on the political orientation of Albertans will be discussed by looking at three areas. Firstly, what effect has the changes in the structural makeup of the Alberta economy had on political events? Alberta is now an urban technologically sophisticated province and the demands on the political parties reflect this socio-economic reality. Secondly, why has the NDP had so much difficulty in attracting votes from an historically supportive group, organized labor? Finally, in what ways can the New Democratic Party benefit from the alterations that have taken place in the socio-economic character of the province?

The basic hypothesis of this thesis and the conceptual framework to be utilized to support it have been set out in this Chapter. It will be followed in Chapter Two by a discussion of the political history of the province in order to get a more thorough understanding of the political culture of Alberta and how this has affected the NDP. Chapter Three will analyse recent public attitudes about Alberta politics in general, and the NDP as a "party of principle", and the implications of this for the electoral success and failure of the party. Chapter four will deal with the impact of the changing demographic and socio-economic conditions in Alberta on the NDP's potential support base. The final chapter will provide some conclusions explaining why the New Democratic Party has not been able to gain wide-spread acceptance from Alberta voters and suggesting how this situation may be changed. The specific factors that will be used to examine these various aspects of political culture will be set out in the introduction of each chapter.

Chapter Two: The Political History and Political Culture of Alberta

One category of factors that effect individual orientation toward political matters are those historical events and experiences that have had a marked influence on the individual throughout the life cycle. [31]

It is my contention that Myron Johnson's thesis, that the failure of the CCF in Alberta was largely due to an "accident of history", is not sufficient to account for the continuing failure of the Alberta NDP. [32] He supports the position that because the CCF failed to take advantage of the fall of the UFA in 1935 it never had the opportunity to develop a large enough constituency from which to build support. As well, Johnson argues that the ideological orientation of the CCF did not play a major role in the failure of the party. I suggest however, that the continued social democratic philosophy of the Alberta NDP has been a very substantial factor in its failure to attract more support in the sixties and seventies. The discovery of Leduc No. 1 in 1947 marked the beginning of a period of prosperity that has continued virtually uninterrupted up until the present time. This has contributed to a situation whereby support for conservative political values and policies has gone almost unchallenged. The discrepancy between the conservative political values of the people and the left wing principles of the party remains the fundamental issue that must be resolved if the party is to achieve greater electoral success.

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[31] Walter Rosenbaum Political Culture Op cit. Page 16.

[32] Myron Johnson The Failure of the CCF in Alberta: An Accident of History Master of Arts Thesis, Political Science Department, University of Alberta, 1974.

This chapter will examine and analyse a number of components of Alberta's political history in order to support the argument that a series of events and conditions, the most important of these being the discovery and oil and gas and the wealth generated by these findings, contributed to a situation whereby a substantial segment of the population came to support very conservative attitudes and beliefs. It will begin with a brief analysis of the influence of the Liberal Party, the United Farmers of Alberta, the Social Credit and the Progressive Conservative Party on the development of the province's political culture. This will be followed by an examination of the settlement patterns, social, economic and religious beliefs manifest during the formative years of Alberta's history in order to determine the impact of political socialization on the socio-political orientation of the population. The fact that there is no comprehensive survey or information base from which to draw conclusions as to the role of political socialization in Alberta requires some interpretation of events based on limited empirical data. The socio-demographic and historical evidence that is available has been utilized and the analysis in this chapter follows from it.

The Political History of Alberta

In order to understand the failure of the NDP it is necessary to have some understanding of the political history of the province. Myron Johnson argues that the province's radical past should have been conducive to the programs and policies of the CCF. The popularity of the Non-Partisan League and the success of the UFA are cited as two examples of unorthodox political parties that enjoyed considerable acceptance. As well, the impact of the depression contributed to a situation whereby much of the electorate once again began to look to non-traditional solutions to the problems facing Alberta society. It is my contention however, that the dramatic changes tht began to take place in the political culture of the province after 1935 made it highly unlikely that a party that was seen to be on the far left of the Alberta political spectrum could have succeeded. Specifically I am referring to the profound transformation that took place in the socio-economic makeup of the province after the second world war. The economic recovery that was occurring was given further impetus by the discovery of Leduc No. 1 in 1947. The prosperity that has been generated in this province over the last three decades has facilitated the acceptance of social and economic policies that are seen to continue this growth. Politically this has translated itself into thirty six years of Social Credit domination followed by the election of a Progressive Conservative government that has gone virtually unchallenged since 1971.

The set of socio-economic and political circumstances that existed during the period Johnson looked at in his analysis of the CCF, have changed dramatically since World War II. It is my contention that much of his argument is valid for the era he was studying but is not as applicable today. Alberta's political history since the 1940s overwhelming points to the fact that a substantial component of the electorate equate "good" government with conservative policies and programs.

The Liberals

As is true with most governments maintenance of power became the primary goal of the Alberta Liberals. In order to achieve this end, the demands of as large a segment of the electorate as possible had to be met.[33] A very substantial proportion of the Alberta population during this period were farmers, and their interests were initially reflected in the policy positions of the government. The "political" advantages which normally accrue to the governing party , namely greater access to financial resources and the ability to reward supporters by way of patronage positions, hindered the three Conservatives in the opposition from mounting much of a challenge to the incumbent Liberals. [34] Within the political framework of the National Policy of John A. Macdonald, the prairies were developed as an economic hinterland.[35] This "quasi-colonial" status was not only economic but political, and this made [36] it a primary requisite for the provincial political system to be able to stand up to the national government. The general dissatisfaction with the fact that provincial parties were seen to represent little more than the interests of their federal masters contributed to a situation whereby a less traditional course of political action became more acceptable . As a result of internal dissension within the provincial parties and tensions at the federal level, partisan politics in Alberta began to change rather dramatically in 1919 and 1920. During this period, the party system succumbed to the demands of farmers for direct input in the policy making process and the unique brand of[37] Alberta "populism" began to develop.[38]

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[33] David Smith "A Comparison of Political Developments in Saskatchewan" in Journal of Canadian Studies November 1967, Page 19.

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[34] The Liberals were able to maintain their grasp on power successfully until the "Great Waterways Scandal" became public in 1910. This scandal forced the resignation of the premier and resulted in "perhaps the most serious event in the political history of Alberta." Lewis Thomas The Liberal Party in Alberta 1905-21 in Society and Politics in Alberta C. Caldarola ed. Page 9

[35] John Richards and Larry Pratt Prairie Capitalism Toronto:McClelland and Stewart, 1979. Page 75.

[36] For a thorough analysis of "modern" regional economic grievances see Kenneth H. Norrie Western Economic Grievances: An overview with Special Reference to Freight Rates A Paper Presented to the Workshop on the Political Economy of Confederation in Kingston:Ontario November 8 - 10, 1978.

The UFA

In 1921, the United Farmers of Alberta (UFA), running candidates for the first time, won the provincial election by a substantial margin. The UFA drew support from the rural communities because of its attack on the "eastern establishment" and the practices of the old-line parties. The UFA, realizing that this disenchantment was widely felt ran on a platform criticizing the Liberals and Conservatives for their dependence on campaign funds from large industrial and commercial interests.[39] This dependency on their financial support allegedly resulted in policies benefitting certain large capitalist interests. The UFA and the other populist farm-radical [40] organizations that developed in Alberta shared the belief that the genesis of society's problems lay in the competitive social order dominated by a few wealthy individuals. However by 1935, the solutions presented by the UFA to the social and economic problems of the depression were seen as inadequate and the voters of the province looked to the political "right" . [41]

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[37] Alan Cairns "The Electoral System and the Party System in Canada" in Journal of Political Science March 1968. As well see J.T. McLeod "Party Structure and Party Reform" in A. Rotstein ed. The Prospect of Change Toronto 1965 and John Meisel "The Stalled Omnibus: Canadian Parties in the Fifties" in Social Research XXX 1963.

[38] During the first three decades of the 20th century the pattern of economic development in Alberta was rather chaotic. Successive provincial governments borrowed heavily to provide needed communication and transportation links, expanded railroad facilities and low cost telephone service. The expense was immense by 1913 Alberta's debt was 33.7 million, between 1913 and 1921 this debt grew to 62 million. A 1938 study written for the Rowell-Sirois Royal Commission on Dominion Provincial Relations concluded that Alberta's financial position after World War I turned on the growing significance of the debt burden. L. Pratt and J. Richards Prairie Capitalism Op cit. Page 19.

[39] C. B. Macpherson Democracy in Alberta Op cit Page 41.

The Rise of Social Credit

The Alberta Social Credit Party, led by William Aberhart, presented a unique mixture of economic and religious philosophy as the basis of its platform. [42]

Social Credit was first developed by a Scottish engineer, Major Clifford Hugh Douglas (1878 - 1954). However it was Aberhart who saw the applicability of Douglas's theory to the Alberta situation. The basic notion anchoring Social Credit was the belief that the existing economic system must ultimately result in "poverty in the midst of plenty." The theoretical framework used by Social Credit was based on an economic model, with the A plus B theorem as its central doctrine.[43] Aberhart's argument that finance control had become divorced from ownership of industry and the actual management of production, allowed the party to uphold free enterprise while denouncing those attributes of capitalism which were widely detested, such as the creation of artificial scarcity and concentration of economic power. Aberhart's shrewdness in recognizing the potential popularity of such policies is a factor that is often overlooked in an analysis of Social Credit support. As well, the importance of Aberhart's religious appeal and the lack of a unified well-organized political alternative combined to produce a milieu in which Social Credit could flourish. Aberhart's denunciation of greedy, unscrupulous, money lenders of eastern financial interests furnished an outlet for the grievances of many of the economically deprived members of Alberta society. The support given Aberhart stemmed partly from the basic parallels between his evangelical group and the Social Credit movement. "Both were lay rather than professional movements, non-conformist in temper, hostile to the respectable well to do and to eastern interests and both made their appeal to the economically hard hit sections of the population." [44] "The continous social unsettlement that characterized Alberta's history from 1906 implied a crisis situation favourable to traditionalist religious teachings which upheld the recognized symbols of authority, and promised security and stability." [45] The fact that the fundamental religions that were so prevalent in the province during this period, were conservative, individualistic and therefore largely anti-socialist did not contribute to the popularity of the CCF.

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[40] One of the most important of these early farm-labor organizations was the Non-Partisan League which was formed in 1916. The Non-Partisan league and the UFA merged in 1919. The impact of the League in the political mobilization of Alberta farmers during this period should not be overlooked, in so far as they helped shape the ideas of the UFA leadership and therefore the course of the farmer's movement in Alberta politics. For a more complete analysis of this early period in Alberta's political history and the impact of these various movements see Paul Sharp The Agrarian Revolt in Western Canada Minneapolis:University of Minnesota, 1948. Page 79.

[41] C. B. Macpherson Op cit. Page 47.

[42] "Alberta has had an exceptional history of religious non-conformity, a history without contemporary parallel among the provinces of Canada." W.E. Mann Sect, Cult and Church in Alberta Toronto:University of Toronto Press, 1953. Page 3. Mann claims that in 1946, about 20% of Alberta's population belonged to unorthodox religious movements, and there were some 50 of these religious groups active in the province.

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[43] According to Douglas "A" equals the flow of purchasing power to the masses (as represented by wages, salaries and dividends) and B equals bank charges , overhead costs, taxes and the cost of raw materials. To remain economically viable a businessmen must include both A and B when he is setting prices. According to Social Credit,in the capitalist system only the A payments increase consumer purchasing power, money available to buy the products. The rate of flow of purchasing power to individuals is represented by A, but since all payments go into prices, the rate of flow of prices cannot be less than A plus B. Since A will not purchase A plus B, a proportion of the product at least equivalent to B must be distributed by a form of purchasing power which is not comprised in the descriptions grouped under A. The aim of this new economic system was to balance, production and purchasing power. C.Douglas Credit-Power and DemocracyPages 20 - 25.

On June 25, 1943 William Aberhart passed away and was succeeded by Ernest Manning. During the 1930s and 1940s the CCF was enjoying a great deal of public support across Canada. [46]

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[44] W.E. Mann "Sect and Cult in Western Canada" in B. Blishen, F. Jones et al. Canadian Society Canada:Macmillan, 1968. Page 518.

[45] Ibid Page 519

[46] In 1940, the CCF received 8.5% of the total national vote; in September 1943, it headed the gallup poll. Party membership in 1942 was 20,000 nationally, two years later, the party had one hundred thousand members across Canada. G.L. Caplin The Dilemna of Canadian Socialism Op cit. Page

[46] This popularity was seen by Manning as a possible threat to the Social Credit in Alberta. In light of this challenge from the left, Manning conducted the 1944 provincial election campaign on the basis of free enterprise versus socialism. [47] Johnson argues that it was largely Manning's ability to appeal to certain latent concerns and fears of the province's farmers and workers and in effect manufacture an issue that disuaded a number of voters from supporting the CCF. Under his leadership socialism supplanted international finance as the alleged principal enemy of the people of Alberta. The Social Credit party stood firmly against the growing leftist trend in Canada and threw its propaganda resources into the Cold War struggle against communism. During the 1940s and 1950s, "a conservative almost xenophobic ideological climate continued to prevail in Alberta." [48] Appealing to the fear that was being generated throughout the United States about the 'red menace', Manning equated the socialism of the CCF with Nazism and communism. "The struggle against socialism conveniently replaced the struggle for Social Credit, in the 1944 election.[49]It obviously was a successful strategy in so far as the government was returned with a larger majority than ever before.The menace of socialism became and remained

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[46](cont'd)88.
[47]Myron Johnson The Failure of the CCF in Alberta: An Accident of History Op cit.
[48]L. Pratt and J. Richards Prairie Capitalism Op cit. Page 82.
[49]C. B. Macpherson Op cit. Page 206.

the staple of the Alberta Social Credit propaganda, throughout Manning's years as premier. The religious fundamentalism that was characteristic of much of rural Alberta in conjunction with a general antipathy for the political "left" clearly did not contribute much support for the "radical" positions of the Alberta CCF: on the contrary this negative image has continued largely unabated up till the present .

The period of the late 1940's marked a fundamental change in the socio-economic structure of Alberta, which quickly manifested itself in the political arena. [50] Specifically resource development and urbanization posed a real threat to the rural oriented Social Credit government. Sixty percent of the Social Credit seats were from rural constituencies, at a time when the province was rapidly becoming urbanized. As well, the new immigrants to the province did not readily identify with the Social Credit philosophy.

> An entire generation of newcomers, young people and immigrants, presented Social Credit with an increasingly impassive and unresponsive audience. These strange faces were not angry with Social Credit, merely somewhat bored.[51]

The Social Credit regime was rapidly acquiring a tired and complacent public image. Manning managed to maintain the support of the people for the party during the 1967 campaign, largely due to his own personal popularity. Nevertheless, the Conservative Party did capture six seats and 27% of the vote, the largest opposition in twelve years. Manning retired in 1968 and was replaced by Harry Strom.

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[50] On February 13,1947 Leduc Number 1 was discovered.

[51] J.J. Barr The Dynasty Op cit. Page 163.

The thirty six years of Social Credit rule were characterized by policies and programs that overtly manifested the traditional economic and social values preached by Aberhart and Manning. The fact that the party remained in power for almost four decades suggests that some of these socio-political orientations were passed on from one generation to the next.

In the 1971 election the inability of the Social Credit to attract new voters and the increasingly negative perception of the party resulted in the Progressive Conservatives capturing 49 out of the 75 seats, Social Credit 25 seats, and the NDP one seat. The overall image of the Progressive Conservatives was helped by the positive impact the local candidates and the party leadership had on the Alberta voting public. The dramatic turnabout in public opinion regarding Social Credit and the Conservatives was the result of a number of factors. David Elton and Arthur Goddard found that the overall public perception of Social Credit and its leadership were both negative.[52] Manning's retirement gave the Progressive Conservatives a major opportunity to increase their public exposure, which they did with a by-election victory in the former premier's constituency in Edmonton. As well, Harry Strom was unable to project himself as a strong leader, a situation Peter Lougheed took effective advantage of.

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[52] D.Elton and A.Goddard The Conservative Takeover in C. Caldarola Op cit Page 49.

> There was a considerable amount of defection from other parties to the Progressive Conservatives. Opposition to the Social Credit administration seemed to coalesce around the Lougheed Team.[53]

Neither the Liberals nor the New Democratic Party were perceived in a positive manner by a majority of Alberta voters. Elton and Goddard found that the negative image of both the Liberals and the NDP was of such a magnitude that radical and extensive changes in perception among a large segment of the electorate would have to take place before either could effectively compete with the Progressive Conservatives. The identification of the NDP with a limited segment of the Alberta population, namely trade unionists and the working class, continues to limit its electoral opportunities. The party's failure to convince middle class Albertans that [54] it is a viable political alternative remains a major stumbling block . Elaboration of the factors resulting in this negative image of the NDP will be the focus of the following chapters.

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[53] Ibid Page 55.

[54] The concept of "class" will be defined for the purpose of this thesis in a strictly "objective" sense. It will be used to designate the fact that people identify themselves with other individuals who correspond to their objective socio-economic position. See Donna M. Poetschke and Roberta McKown "Perception of Class in Alberta" in C. Caldarola Op cit. Pages 193 - 203. The measures used to determine class differeniation are standard in political sociology: occupation, income and education.

"Now The Lougheed Team"

The Lougheed administrations have largely been dominated by policy questions dealing with natural resource development, more specifically the issue of oil and gas pricing, and the role of the federal government in Alberta affairs. Premier Lougheed adamantly argues that the control of natural resources is completely under the purview of the provinces and that the federal government has no right to interfere in policy decisions of the Alberta government. This type of confrontation with the federal government extends into virtually every area of social and economic policy. The fundamental belief that the less governments interfere in the lives of the "people" the better, has been a consistent and dominant position of the Progressive Conservatives. This, in combination with an "Alberta first" policy on economic development, has been very popular with the average Albertan. In examining the conduct of Peter Lougheed as premier, it is evident that he conceives of his administration as one that will provide effective "business government", for example one that stresses the administering of the affairs of the province rather than developing major new initiatives. In a number of his election campaigns

Lougheed has stated that the people of Alberta should make their choice as to whom they support politically on the basis of which party can best manage and sustain the prosperity of the province. The implicit and on many occassions explicit support of private enterprise as the answer to continuing the economic growth of Alberta has been a central doctrine of the Progressive Conservatives. As with the Social Credit before them, the Alberta Conservatives realize that a strong current of conservatism still dominates the political attitudes of many Alberta voters. A highly individualistic and free-enteprise orientation is still widely popular in both the rural and urban areas.

The anti-interventionist "business orientation" of successive governments appears to be a factor in the long term success of a political party in this province. The increasing "conservatism" of Social Credit is a factor that became very evident. Initially it offered to change the existing conduct of political behavior. However eventually it sacrificed party principles to sustain power, usually by moving to the "right" ideologically. The fact that the Progressive Conservatives were already substantially to the right when they took office made this move unecessary. The Lougheed administrations represent a continuation of the conservative political culture that has predominated in this province since the second world war.

The Alberta Political Culture and the CCF/NDP

As stated in Chapter One, it is the basic tenet of this thesis that Alberta has manifested a relatively right wing political culture from the period of the 1930's to the present time. [55] This conservatism has contributed to a situation whereby the collectivist and socialist philosophy of the CCF/NDP has been viewed with skepticism by a substantial proportion of the province's electorate over an extended period of time.

The term conservatism refers to the "sense of resistance to change and the tendency to prefer safe, traditional and conventional forms of institutions and behaviours, and explicit support for individualistic free-enterprise. [56] A number of people have put forward lists of attitudes that characterize the extreme or "ideal" conservative. Those individuals or societies which manifest a substantial number of these clusters are seen to be more conservative than those that do not.[57]

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[55] I am using the term "political culture" to refer to the "particular distribution of patterns of orientation toward political objects among the members of a society." G. Almond and S. Verba The Civic Culture Boston:Little Brown 1965. Pages 10 - 15 The notion of orientation, following Parsons and Shills, refers to the internalized aspects of objects and relationships that can be broken down into three components: cognition (knowledge and belief) Affective (feelings) and evaluational (judgements and opinions)

[56] ed. Glen Wilson The Psychology of Conservatism New York:Academic Press, 1973. Page 4

[57] Wilson suggests that there are six main attitude clusters he labels them in the following way:

1. A tendency toward religious fundamentalism
2. Pro-establishment politics (maintenance of the status quo)
3. Insistence on strict rules and punishment
4. Ethnocentrism and intolerance of minority groups
5. Preference for conventional institutions and

[57] Through an analysis of important components of Alberta society I hope to demonstrate that the province has clearly exhibited a number of these types of features throughout its history. Specifically, I will argue that Alberta has a history of religious fundamentalism, a tendency toward "pro-establishment politics" and a preference for conventional institutions and organizations. As well I will show that there is a fundamental contrast between the social, cultural and economic makeup of the province, and the platforms and ideology of the NDP. This conflict between the attitudes and beliefs of many Alberta voters and the NDP party program has been a major contributing factor in the development of the negative image the party currently "enjoys". This poor public perception of the party has existed from the days of the CCF. The economic prosperity that has been generated in this province for the past twenty-five years has brought with it support for conservative political parties, and it is in this socio-economic environment that the NDP has had to compete.

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[57] (cont'd)organizations

6. Anti-Hedonistic outlook and restriction of sexual behaviour.

Ibid Pages 4 -7

Early Development of Alberta Political Culture

A. Settlement Patterns

In regard to two important components in the development of the Alberta political culture, the settlement pattern of new immigrants and the distribution of the population, the majority of the population of Alberta resided in rural areas until 1961.[58] Much of this farm population strongly supported the right of the individual to own and control his land without interference from the state. Individual initiative and self-reliance were two important characteristics of many of the new immigrants from abroad. In 1934 62% of the population lived in rural areas, by 1961 this had decreased to 36.7%. Only 22% of Albertans lived in Edmonton and Calgary in 1931, as compared to the 51% who lived on farms. Most of the remaining 27% lived in rural non-farm communities, hamlets, villages and small cities.[59] The predominance of the rural-farm population gives some indication of the importance of agriculture to the economic and social makeup of Alberta during this period. Given this [60]

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[58] W. McVey 1976. Page 7.

[59] Myron Johnson The Failure of the CCF in Alberta: An Accident of History Op cit. Page 25.

[60] In 1921 farmers made up 36 per cent of all the gainfully employed in Alberta, in 1931 and 1941 32 per cent, as compared to 16 per cent in the whole of Canada. Wage and salary earners outside of agriculture in 1941 comprised 41 per cent of the whole gainfully occupied population in Alberta as compared to 63 per cent in the whole of Canada.

[60] high dependency on one industry, and the fact that a substantial proportion of Alberta's farmers owned their own farms, there can be little doubt that attachment to the land was one important factor in the formulation of Alberta's early socio-political attitudes. A large segment of this farm population was not only new to Alberta but was new to Canada, and was experiencing dramatic social change in a relatively short period. Their land and their meagre possessions were virtually the only things that brought some sense of continuity and stability to their lives. As well, their livelihood and basic necessities were provided by production from the land. The farm was the centre of life and any impact on it had a direct effect on the well being of the individual. It is my contention that the underlying attitudes reflected in the fact that there were strong ties to the land had implications for political socialization. Much of the population was highly self-reliant, and the optimal role for government was seen to be one that supported traditional values while limiting it's overall interference in the day to day affairs of its citizens. [61]

During the early decades of this century, Alberta experienced a very high growth rate. This initial stage of major expansion in population was largely due to the flood of immigrants from Europe looking to escape the political and economic difficulties they encountered in their traditional homeland. As well, large numbers of immigrants from the United States looked to western Canada as the place to begin again. In 1901 the population of Alberta was 73,022; by 1911, it had increased almost 500% to 374,663.[62] In 1931 there were 732,000 people residing in the province approximately double the 1911 figures.[63] By 1961 this figure had increased to 1,331,944 and in 1971 to 1,627,875.[64] This dramatic increase in settlement was the genesis of the ethnic mosaic that has characterized the province up to the present day. The rural/urban distribution indicates that a majority of these new immigrants settled in non-urban areas. Morton refers to the social attitude that predominated during this period as a "frontier mentality". What he is describing is the fact that many of these new immigrants were coming into an area where there were virtually no existing social and economic support systems. Individual self reliance and willingness to endure hardship were attributes necessary for survival. In many cases this was not even enough, the high rate of bankruptcy and corresponding societal dislocation resulted in great hardship. People were forced to make do with what they had and if circumstances dictated they were forced to move on. [65] "Between 1911 and 1931 Alberta was still absorbing the last great wave of immigration in the history of North American settlement." [66] In terms of the ethnic composition of these new settlers, Alberta was much more heterogeneous than Canada generally. [67] In 1931 only 58% of the Alberta population was born in Canada, with another 15% born in Britain, and 27% foreign born.[68] Overall, immigration accounted for 42% of Alberta's 1931 population, double the figure for Canada as a whole.

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[60] (cont'd)C. B. Macpherson Democracy in Alberta OP cit Page 26.

[61] 73%of farms were fully owned and another 12% were partially owned. Only 12% of the famers were solely renters." See Myron Johnson Pages 20 -30.

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[62] A. Morton History of Prairie Settlement Toronto:MacMillan and Company, 1938. Pages 126 - 127.

[63] Census of Canada 1941 Volume 1 Page 578.

[64] Census of Canada 1971 Volume 1 The largest percentage gain of 412.6% occurred during the 1901 to 1911 censal decade. The largest numerical increase for Alberta was found in the 1951 to 1961 period with a growth of 392,443 or a 41.8% increase over the inter-censal period.

In the period from 1902 to 1915 planned immigration from the United States brought several congregations to Alberta. A western Canadian sect was organized with half of its membership in Alberta. In 1906 the Church of Christ, a splinter group from the American disciples of Christ, was begun in Edmonton. The members were largely Anglo-Saxon from Eastern Canada and the United States. [69] A Seventh Day Adventist Congregation emerged in Calgary at about the same time from the Dakotas. As of 1921 there were 3,533 members in these sects, and they were beginning to attract settlers of Scandanavian and British origin. [70] By 1946 close to 60% of the 53,000 fundamentalists in Alberta were of non-Anglo-Saxon origin, more than half of these being of German ancestry.[71]

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[65] W.L. Morton The Progressive Party in Alberta Toronto:University of Toronto Press, 1950. Page 378.

[66] Ibid Pages 37 - 38.

[67] In 1931 the largest groups in terms racial origin were the British with 53% of the people of the province identifying themselves as such. This number was roughly proportional to Canada as a whole. In regards to other major groups, Germans made up 10% of the Alberta population as compared to 4% in the rest of Canada, Ukrainians comprised 8% more than double the 3% for Canada. By 1971 46.8% of Albertans identified their ethnic origin as British, 14.1% German, 8.4% Ukrainian and 6.1% Scandanavian. Census of Canada 1971. Volume 1 Part 3.

[68] Census of Canada 1951 Volume 1 Pages 173-177.

[69] W.E. Mann Sect, Cult and Church in Alberta Op. Cit. Page 12.

Many of these new arrivals brought with them a definite set of political and social beliefs. This had a tremendous influence on the early development of Alberta's political orientation. For example, a large number of immigrants came to the West to escape the political tyranny that existed in their traditional homeland. The result was a great deal of hesitancy when it came to participate in the political process. They were generally very conservative both in their political and social attitudes. People knew what was expected in terms of prescribed patterns of behaviour, and divergence from the status quo was looked upon unfavourably. Societal rules and regulations were maintained through strict enforcement. This phenomenon is important in understanding the early development of Alberta's political culture. Many of the people who settled in Alberta during this period came from a socio-political tradition where obedience to authority figures was a prerequiste for survival.The family unit itself was generally very hierarchical and each individual understood what his or her position was within the system, disobedience was dealt with firmly. The social and economic conditions that prevailed at that time were so tenuous it meant that each member of the community was in a real sense highly dependent upon family and neighbours for surivival. If someone was not reliable in terms of fulfilling his obligations and maintaining a proper code of conduct the consequences would be felt throughout the community. The high degree of interdependence in Alberta society during the early years required people to adhere to the law.

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[70] Ibid Page 13.
[71] Ibid Page 35.

B. Religious Orientation

Another important sociological characteristic shared by a substantial proportion of these new arrivals was a strong religious orientation [72]. The impact of the various religious groups in Alberta was extremely important in the development and manifestation of political attitudes among a substantial segment of the electorate during the 1930s and 1940s.

> When drought and the collapse of wheat prices shook the foundations of Western rural society, and man no longer seemed to have any rational control over his fate, the simple faith of religion secured a new

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[72] In 1901 Alberta had approximately 3,212 Mormons or 46.6% of all the Mormons in Canada. Thirty years later the figure had reached 13,185 or 59.5% of the Canadian total. See W.A. Mackintosh and W.L.G. Young Group Settlement - Ethnic Communities in Western Canada Toronto:MacMillan and Company, 1948. Page 189.

hold.[73]

The phenomenal spread of religious sects in Alberta after 1930 was one interesting manifestation of the social upheaval that was taking place. Mann in his work on various aspects of evangelical fundamentalism in Alberta describes the religious history of Alberta as "one without contemporary parallel among the other provinces in Canada." [74] There were in Alberta not only the customary evangelical bodies together with numerous older sects from Europe but also many other lesser known sects and cults which virtually had their genesis in Alberta.The popularity of these unorthodox religious movements was widespread. [75]

In 1927 the Prophetic Baptist Movement, which later gave birth to the Alberta Social Credit Party was founded by William Aberhart. Biblical prophecy and fundamentalist literalism were two of its most distinctive features. Aberhart, a teacher and Sunday school preacher, began broadcasting his religious message across Alberta in 1925;

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[73] S.D. Clark Church and Sect in Canada Toronto:University of Toronto Press, 1948. Page 432.
[74] W.E. Mann Sect, Cult, and Church in Alberta Toronto:University of Toronto Press, 1973. Page3.
[75] Ibid Page 3. "The non-denominational fundamentalist Bible school at Three Hills, Alberta, the Prairie Bible Institute, had in 1947 the highest daytime enrollment of any seminary or Bible school in North America. The extraordinary number of theological graduates turned out annually by the Prairie Bible Institute, combined with the output of the province's ten other seminaries made Alberta the leading province in Canada for Bible-school trained professionals."

by 1935 Mann estimates that his audience numbered 300,000.[76] As of 1945 there were roughly 35 identifiable sects in Alberta. The one common denominator of these rather diverse organizations was their belief in the literal truth of the Bible and an absolute code of morality.

> The sects were almost unanimous in their socio-religious protest. They bitterly attacked modernism, including all theories of evolution and biblical criticism.[77]

The strength of these fundamentalist [78] movements came largely from the rural areas where support was virtually universal.

The ten or so cults which settled in Alberta between 1910 and 1946 were predominantly Christian. A number of the very early arrivals combined elements of Hinduism with Christianity. They by and large rejected the virtues of societal redemption and concentrated on the salvation of the individual.[79] This salvation was to come through hard work and individual perserverance. The impact of the "Protestant work ethic" should not be underestimated when looking at the socio-political attitudes held by many Albertans . The notion that one did not rely on others, particularly the government, for assistance, stems from this individualistic orientation.

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[76] Ibid Page 22.

[77] Ibid Page 28.

[78] 80% of the following of the Cooneyites, Seventh Day Adventists, and Jehovah's Witnesses and more than 60% of that of the Mennonites, the German Baptists, the United Evangelical Church, the Church of God and the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada were rural. Ibid Page 29.

[79] Ibid Page 30 -35.

The social and political conservatism of the established Protestant denominations, in combination with the more unorthodox but equally "right wing" fundamentalist sects and cults, contributed to the development of a socio-religious milieu which was unique to Alberta. The transient state of Alberta society, due in part to the Depression and the massive immigration of aliens to Alberta, created a social and political climate where "upward mobility and social organization became problematic." The traditional Protestant church served the needs of the "middle class" whose existing social community structures were secure and provided comfort, while the more unorthodox groups addressed themselves to the needs of those individuals who were not as well integrated into the society.[80] However, both of these groups staunchly defended traditional puritan and evangelical values. As well, they constituted a rallying point for other conservative groups whose beliefs and way of life were perceived to be challenged by the period of rapid social change. The immigration of the early 1900s also contributed to Alberta developing a unique ethnic and cultural environment. Associated with these new immigrants were traditionally oriented family values and attitudes.

This examination of the socio-demographic, economic and cultural makeup of the province during a critical period for the CCF/NDP has attempted to demonstrate that the prevailing political culture was, according to the criteria set out by Wilson, relatively conservative. Maintenance of the status quo, and the obligation to support traditional institutions and organizations, were two components of Alberta society that were readily apparent. The fundamentalism of many of the major religious groups precluded support for any individual, organization or political party that called for radical measures to change the existing social and economic order.

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[80] IBid Page 150 - 160

> After 1930, the socio-economic situation in Alberta called for all institutions to support the traditional values against the impact of urbanism, modernism and acute social dislocation. This was the prominent feature of the evangelical sects and cults.[81]

The unusual set of geographic, socio-economic and historical forces combined to keep Alberta's community life during this critical formative period in a highly unsettled state. "Distance from the older cultural centers of Eastern Canada weakened the impact of the traditionally important institutions and values. The flat fertile plains of Southern Alberta resulted in rapid over-settlement and subsequently in depopulation and community instability. [82] Both the numbers and the range of different ethnic and religious groups in the province, none of which held a controlling social position, posed great problems for societal integration. This was further compounded by the fact that the boom-bust pattern which had characterized Alberta's economy since its inception as a province led to further high rates of social upheaval. The high degree of support that existed for the fundamentalist sects, cults and other more traditional denominations reflected the fact that there was a need for some type of socio-economic stabilty. They addressed themselves directly to the interests of those groups not clearly integrated into the community structure. By bringing in members of various ethnic groups into a religious-social community which preserved many of their old traditions, values and customs, the sects served to protect these groups from social disintegration. The fundamentalist movement in many ways constituted a reaction against the forces of urbanism, cultural maturity and centralization. [83] During this period the conservative values and attitudes espoused by these religious groups clearly impacted upon the social, economic and political events that were taking place in the province. It was in this political environment that the Alberta CCF had its genesis; the NDP continues to be affected by similar right wing orientations. [84]

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[81] Ibid Page 156.
[82] W.E. Mann Sect, Cult, and Church in Alberta Op cit. Page 158- 160

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[83] Ibid Page 157.

[84] C. Betke The United Farmers of Alberta 1921-1935. Master of Arts Thesis Department of History, University of Alberta 1971. Page 113.

Chapter Three: The NDP: A Party of Principle

"In many polities political parties play a major role in shaping mass political orientations."[85] For this reason it is important to look at those features of the Alberta NDP that distinguish it from the other major parties in the province in order to ascertain what impact these differences may be having on the party's chances for electoral success. The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate that the Alberta NDP has emphasized and continues to emphasize certain ideological principles in the conduct of party affairs at the expense of political pragmatism. This has directly contributed to the party developing a very negative image in the minds of a large segment of the population. Through an analysis of the strategies and issues the party has chosen to highlight in election campaigns it will be demonstrated that the party has, relatively speaking, been faithful to its basic ideological principles. This has resulted in a situation whereby a substantial proportion of the electorate perceive the party as so far to the left as to be totally unacceptable. The failure of the party to alter its political strategy to meet the demands of the electorate has resulted in it being very poorly perceived by a substantial component of the the electorate. One thing that becomes immediately evident however, when looking at

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[85] W. Rosenbaum Political Culture Op cit. Page 20

the Alberta NDP's policy positions, is the fact that they are not in an objective sense extreme. It is only when one looks at the party in light of the political culture of the province that it can be seen to be to "radical" . The combination of the party's support for leftist policies and programs with the right wing political orientation of a large segment of the electorate has played a major role in the development of the negative image of the party.

Types of Political Parties

Political parties differ as to how they measure success and in the methodology they will use to achieve it. These differences permit a dichotomization of parties into those that are oriented towards electoral success and those where the maintenance of party principle is paramount. The dissimilarities between these two general types have a substantial impact on the relationship between the party and the electorate. In those parties where winning elections is the primary goal, political pragmatism is one of the guiding forces in the decision making process of the party. In the party oriented toward electoral success, there is a strong tendency to subordinate principle (other than the continuation of freedom, democracy and legality) to the requirement of winning elections.[86] The Liberal and Conservative parties in Canada are examples of this type of party. They attempt to attract "as many interests and demographic groups as possible."[87] This is partially achieved by the party modifying its position on controversial issues and by avoiding dogmatic ideological principles which could alienate a large segment of the electorate.[88] F.G. Bailey [89] argues that politics has essentially two faces, its public face (normative rules) and its private wisdom (pragmatic rules). Normative rules are very general guidelines to conduct, they are used to judge particular actions as ethically right or wrong. Pragmatic rules are statements not about whether a particular line of conduct is just or unjust but whether or not it will be effective. In the case of the Alberta NDP the argument will be made that the party has conducted itself on the basis of normative rules. Its support of relatively dogmatic unpopular policies and programs reflects the fact that the party has virtually decided that it is more important to maintain its ideological principles than win elections.

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[86] F.C. Engelmann and Mildred Schwartz Political Parties and the Canadian Social Structure Op cit.

[87] John Meisel's analyses of Canadian voting behaviour indicate that both the Liberals and the Conservatives have had some diffiiculty in attracting votes from particular segments of the society. The most notable of these problems has been the inability of the Conservatives to attract support from French Canadians. This lack of support in Quebec has largely precluded them from forming majority governments. John Meisel ed. 1968 Canadian Federal Election Study A similar set of circumstances exist for the Liberals in western Canada. There are currently only two Liberal members of parliament west of Ontario. In terms of Liberal representation at the provincial level the party is if anything in worse shape. There are no Liberal members in the Alberta legislature and little likelihood of any being elected in the foreseeable future.

[88] Gad Horowitz in his article Conservatism,Liberalism,and Socialism in Canada:An Interpretationin Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science Volume XXXIII (May 1966)Pages 143 - 71 provides a very interesting discussion on the genesis of the ideological differences within political parties.

[89] F. G. Bailey Stratagems and Spoils New York:SchockenBooks, 1969. Pages 2 - 13

Engelmann and Schwartz state that the most enduring party of principle in Canada is the CCF/NDP. It is a party that maintains a high degree of internal consensus , an ideological orientation that is more explicit and consistent than that of other major parties, and a narrow focus of appeal.[90] During the formative years of the United Farmers of Alberta and Social Credit administrations in Alberta, both appeared to be parties of principle. However, like the Lougheed Conservatives of today, these two parties quickly became the "government party of Alberta." Their basic philosophical and ideological positions became subordinated to the goal of exercising and maintaining power. The NDP, on the other hand, has not succumbed to the same degree to the goal of achieving power at the expense of principle. This particular feature of the Alberta NDP is often overlooked by those who attempt to delineate the reasons for the success of the party in Saskatchewan, recent events not-withstanding, and its failure in Alberta. The extreme position the party adopted on a whole series of social and economic issues dissuaded even its most likely source of support, the labour movement, from casting votes for NDP candidates. The negative perception of the NDP's chances for electoral success has become somewhat of a self-fulfilling prophecy. The relative homogeneity of the NDP philosophy and the fact that its ideological orientation is notably more explicit than that of its political opponents, have continued to be important factors contributing to the relatively poor showing of the party in Alberta.

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[90] John Meisel, Papers on the 1962 Election Op cit. Pages 209 -210.

NDP Election Campaigns: Issues and Strategies

The positions adopted by a political party during election campaigns are assumed to give a reasonably accurate portrayal as to what it stands for ideologically and philosophically. For this reason I have included material used by the Alberta NDP in a series of election campaigns. The inclusion of this material does not mean to suggest that other types of information about parties, ie convention resolutions, speeches by party leaders are not useful. However the fact that a party is forced not only to convince its own membership but the general electorate as well, that it does stand for and support certain positions adds some credence to the argument that campaign literature is useful in determining whether a party is actually committed to certain principles.[91]

Throughout the election campaign of 1979 the NDP took a very clear position on the need for much greater participation by the government in the economic and social affairs of the province. These policy positions were in stark contrast to the free-enterprise orientation of the Social Credit and the Progressive Conservatives.[92] By setting out a number of the statements issued by the NDP it will be demonstrated that the NDP has supported policies that reflect its left wing philosophical orientation.

During the 1979 campaign the NDP distributed a pamphlet entitled The Alberta Democrat: A Solid Program For A Better Alberta. This document set out the basic issues the party was going to highlight throughout the election. In descending order of importance these were:

1. Bring down the cost of housing
2. Keep rent controls in full force
3. Reduce property taxes

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[91] The NDP campaign literature used in this analysis was made available thanks to the cooperation and assistance of Mr. Tom Brook who made a number of suggestions in terms of its selection. The 1979 election campaign was chosen for detailed study because sufficient campaign material was available from which to choose a representative cross-section

[92] The one notable exception was the Alberta government's takeover of Pacific Western Airlines. The rationalization for this rather peculiar change in political philosophy had according to the Minister of Transport, more to do with "protecting Alberta's interests" than any radical change in political ideology. For a more complete discussion of the ideological and policy differences betwen the NDP an other political parties in Canada see Chapter 3 in Political Parties and the Canadian Social Structure

4. Increase funding for hospitals and education. Abolish Alberta health care premiums.
5. Improve the rights of Alberta workers.
6. Introduce a Small Business Act to support Alberta's owner-operated businesses.
7. Ensure the development of thriving family farms through a program of limiting farm input costs.
8. Preserve Alberta farmland with effective controls on urban and industrial spread.
9. Provide government regulation of the price of gasoline, electricity and natural gas so all Albertans pay the same price.
10. Bring the Heritage Trust Fund under the control of the Legislature

To implement virtually every one of these policies more legislation would have to be passed further regulating the social and economic affairs of Albertans.

As well during the 1979 campaign the NDP published another campaign document directed specifically at the electorate in the major cities,it was entitled What's At Stake in Urban Alberta . It called for

1. Greater environmental protection
2. Improvement in services for people ie. more daycare, and homecare
3. Increased availabilty of housing
4. Improved worker's rights
5. Greater regulation of oil and gas pricing.

6. Better leadership

The Conservatives on the other hand campaigned against big government and argued for more individual initiative.

Following the 1979 election, the NDP issued a pamphlet called the Alberta NDP What is It?. This document once again restated a number of the basic policies of the party, most notably in the area of energy and resource development.

> The Alberta New Democratic Party wants to bring Alberta's resources under the control of the people of Alberta. Public ownership of all utilities and selective nationalization of resource industries, especially in the Tar Sands, will ensure that resource development serves all Albertans.[93]

It is the position of the NDP that the government of Alberta should

1. Change the province's royalty and tax structure: to increase the Alberta and Canadian share of resource revenue and to increase Canadian ownership in the oil and gas industry.
2. Increse public participation in the energy sector through crown corporations such as Petrocan. [94]

After examining NDP campaign literature it is clear that there was a substantial difference in the strategy chosen by the NDP to attract urban voters as compared to that of the Progressive Conservatives. The Conservative platform of 1979 was based on two central issues: 1) the

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[93] The Alberta NDP What is It? A brief summary of the history, structure and policies of the NDP, 1980.
[94] Alberta NDP Press Release November 9,1979

Lougheed team had done a good job of managing and administering the economic affairs of the province. The Heritage Trust Fund had been set up to ensure the economic prosperity of future generations ;2) there was a need for a strong mandate from the Alberte electorate to let the federal government and the rest of the provinces know that the people of Alberta were fully behind the premier. Peter Lougheed's ability to present himself as the only man who could defend Alberta's rights was in effect the key issue in the campaign. The NDP put least emphasis on energy and leadership questions, while the Progressive Conservatives did precisely the opposite. Virtually the entire conservative campaign centered around the ability of Peter Lougheed to lead the province in its struggle with Ottawa for more control over areas that they saw as being under provincial jurisdiction. The Conservatives argued that the provinces should have the final word in the setting of the price of natural resources, more control over the communications industry, and greater input in the formulation of economic and social programs. . The NDP chose not to emphasize Notley's leadership ability or style; instead,it campaigned on a series of social and economic issues which clearly reflected the party's ideological predisposition. It is my contention that the NDP's tactic of conducting the election on the basis of convincing the electorate that there was a need for a dramatic shift in the role of government,- more involvement in the oil and gas industry, medicare, transportation etc.,was not one that could realistically be expected to appeal to a large segment of the population given the predominantly right wing orientation to politics that has characterized this province since the 1930s. It is evident even from this very brief overview of key party policies that the Alberta NDP has manifested its social democratic ideology consistently throughout its history. The party has remained very much to the left of its political opponents [95] on virtually every crucial social, economic and political issue. [96]

The 1971 Alberta Election

The 1971 Alberta provincial election was a "critical" one due to the fact that it marked the end of 36 years of Social Credit domination and the beginning of Progressive Conservative control. The Social Credit was clearly out of touch with the demands of a highly urbanized, well-educated electorate. The party had developed a tired public image. There were very few new initiatives coming from the party to deal with the major problems confronting the rapidly expanding cities. The NDP had an opportunity to put forward policies that could have met the needs of Albertans, but instead it chose to maintain its traditional policy positions. The party's failure to deal with issues that were of major concern to much of the middle class kept it from making substantial electoral gains. [97] The election was one of critical realignment - "the political consolidation of major economic, demographic, and social changes which had occurred in Alberta since the discovery of Leduc No. 1. Lougheed's victory was an inevitable response of the electoral system to rapid population growth, urbanization, and secularization of Alberta society." [98] (This point will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter IV) In 1971 the NDP faced a pragmatic Progressive Conservative party led by a "young" new leader, Peter Lougheed. "The Progressive Conservative Party stands for free enterprise - not socialism. We also stand for social reform and individual rights - not big government."[99] These types of sentiments clearly reflect the "conservative" ideology [100] the Progressive Conservative government wished to project. [101]

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[95] April 18,1980 Grant Notley introduced Bill 213, the Public Utilities Plebiscite Act. This bill would have required that a plebiscite be held on the question of whether or not the provinces private utility companies should be brought under public control.

[96] On November 9, 1979 Notley held a press conference in which he called for a two pronged approach to the problem of how to recycle the large sums of money involved with the Heritage Trust Fund back into the economy.

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[97] In 1967 there were 65 seats in the Alberta legislature. The Social Credit held 55 seats, the Progressive Conservatives 6, Liberals 3 and 1 Independent. In 1971 six were added to the legislature. Of these 71 seats the Progressive Conservatives won 49, Social Credit 25 and the New Democratic Party 1. After the 1975 election the Progressive Conservatives held 69 seats, Social Credit 4 and the New Democratic Party 1 and 1 Independent Social Credit. In terms of percentage of vote received by each party in these three elections: the Progressive Conservatives won 25.85% of the vote in 1967, 46.07% in 1971 and 62.65% of the vote cast in 1975. The Social Credit received 44.35% in 1967, 40.8% in 1971 and 18.16% in 1975. In 1967 15.89% of the vote cast went to the NDP, in 1971 11.33% and in 1975 12.94%. Source: Provincial Election Statistics for the Province of Alberta. Published by the Communications Department of the Alberta Teachers' Association.

[98] J. Richards and L. Pratt Prairie Capitalism

The New Democratic Party on the other hand has been and continues to be identified as social democratic and as such has remained alienated from the political views of much of the middle class. As indicated by a 1971 election study, much of the middle class equated social democracy with big government, more public spending and higher taxes, a perception not very favourable to the NDP. This image was reinforced by the fact that during the 1975 election much of the NDP's campaign stressed the need for expansion of governmental financial support, particularly in the areas of education and social services. As well, the Alberta NDP came out in favour of a freeze in the well-head price for oil , while the Progressive Conservative government was arguing for Alberta's right to receive more for its rapidly depleting natural resources. Once again the NDP was seen by many people as advocating big government at a time when this was not politically popular.[102]

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[99] Alan Hustak Peter Lougheed Canada:McClleland and Stewart, 1979. Chapter IX

[100] "Providing essential services for the people of Alberta costs a lot of money, however there comes a time when a responsible government must take the lead in exercising restraint." Neil Crawford Progressive Conservative Association of Alberta Report December 1976.

[101] There have been a number of notable contradictions between stated philosophy and actual government practice. On August 2, 1974 90% of Pacific Western Airlines common stock changed hands, the Alberta government bought the airline for 36.7 million dollars. Lougheed explained this rather overt interventionist strategy on the grounds that because "Alberta is land locked, transportation is a key; and air transportation particularly so. For an interesting discussion and analysis of the formative years of Peter Lougheed's life and how this has manifest itself in a number of his political decisions, see Alan Hustak Peter Lougheed Op cit.

The 1971 Alberta Election Study

After the 1971 Alberta election a study was undertaken [103] for the purpose of examining attitudinal preferences and opinions of a random sample of the Alberta population as they relate to the conduct of political affairs both provincially and federally . An analysis of relevant variables on voter attitudes demonstrates that one of the critical factors in the failure of the New Democratic Party in this province to achieve greater electoral success was the negative perception of the party in the minds of a significant proportion of the electorate. It is my contention that the party is still seen to be to "left-wing" when compared to the conservative political orientation of much of the voting public.

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[102] The NDP in Alberta: An Alternative 1975.

[103] Out of a total sample of 1200 randomly drawn from the 1971 voters list, 921 questionaires were returned. Each of the 921 people who responded were interviewed and their responses tabulated. For purposes of the study the province was divided into four "constituencies": Edmonton, Calgary, all Alberta towns and the remaining rural area. A weighting system was used for each area in order to ensure that no constituency was over-represented based on population. Alberta 1971 Election Study - Post Election Survey conducted by the Department of Political Science University of Alberta. R.E. Baird Principal Investigator

When respondents to the Alberta 1971 research project were asked which provincial political party was farthest from their particular views, 28.2% stated that the Social Credit party was least compatible with their political philosophy, 5.1% chose the Alberta Progressive Conservatives, 30.9% the Liberals and 35.8% the New Democratic Party. When asked the exact opposite question, which party most closely represents your views, Social Credit was chosen by 19.7% of the respondents , the Progressive Conservatives by 45.8%, Liberals by 2.7% and the NDP by 8.2%.[104] Even these relatively simple questions leave little doubt that only a small proportion of the sample population favourably identified with the NDP. The less than positive attitude directed toward the party is further reflected in the results of the question, "How would you rate the respective parties on a scale from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating a pronounced dislike and 100 total agreement. Eighty-four percent of the respondents gave the provincial Alberta NDP a rating of 50 or less, and NDP candidates fared little better with 81.4% of respondents scoring them at 50 or less. In contrast 68.3% of the sample gave the Progressive Conservative party a rating of 50 or more and 51.2% gave Progessive Conservative candidates a similar rating. In order to determine more specific details about what this population sample saw to be both positive and negative about Alberta political parties and their leadership, a series of questions was presented which required the respondent to choose what he/she liked and disliked about a party or individual leader. In response to the question what do you like about the NDP, only 7.1% of the people who responded chose any positive characteristic while 92.9% stated "no opinion", "nothing in particular" or left this question blank. Of those individuals who stated a reason why they disliked the NDP 51 percent mentioned the party's "poor public image" and the fact that it was "too radical" and "socialist".

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[104] These percent totals do not necessarily total 100. I am only using those responses where a particular party was chosen . Those people who stated "no opinion" or "did not know" were not included in the calculations.

One must be careful when generalizing from the macro-Canadian political picture to a particular province; nevertheless a number of studies have indicated that there is a general antipathy in the Canadian political culture to symbols evoking "socialism" and the "left" which I believe are applicable to the Alberta situation. N.H. Chi and G.C. Perlin [105] have done some work in the area of analysing the perception of Canadian voters regarding "right"and "left" wing parties. A number of their findings are instructive in regards to voter attitude toward the NDP. Using John Meisel's 1968 National Survey Data,they set out a series of tables indicating Canadian voter preference in regards to "right-wingers" and "left-wingers" and the ideological

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[105] N.H.Chi and G.C. Perlin The New Democratic Party: A Party in Transition in Party Politics in Canda ed. Hugh Thorburn. Scarborough:Ontario:Prentice-Hall, 1979. Page 177 - 187.

position of the "ideal" political party. [106] Chi and Perlin found that 11% of the people polled either had very strong negative feelings or fairly strong negative feelings about right-wingers; this is compared to 23.4% who either had very strongly or fairly stong negative feelings about left wingers. As well, they devised a scale to determine the "ideological position of the ideal party" as conceived by Canadian along a right - left continium. [107] They found that 9.5% of the people thought that the ideal political party should be either extremely, fairly or weakly leftist. Twenty-eight point six percent of the people thought the ideal party should be weakly, fairly or extremely rightist. This pattern of negative attitudes cuts across most group distinctions and is as much a barrier among members of the working class as the middle class. The inability of the Alberta NDP successfully to alter the negative perception of the party in the minds of a large segment of the electorate, as demonstrated by the 1971 election study results, continues to be a very substantial shortcoming.

> the NDP, however less socialist and anti-capitalist in its rhetoric as it exists today, still remains a programmatic party, continuing its commitment to certain distinctive principles and emphasizing the importance of elaborate statements of policy.[108]

As well, such characteristics as "poor past performance" and "little likelihood of future improvement" were reasons stated for disapproval of the party.

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[106] Ibid Page 184
[107] Ibid Page 185.
[108] Ibid Page 183.

In another important area, the Alberta New Democratic Party once again appears to be out of step with the mainstream of Alberta political affairs, at least as indicated by the 1971 survey results. In response to the question, What were the most important campaign issues in the provincial election, the fear of increasing unemployment, followed by a real concern about increased government spending, were by far the most crucial areas of concern. The fact that the NDP has consistently called for greater, not less, government involvement in a wide variety of areas in the private sector and more not less public ownership, does seem to contradict many of the attitudes and preferences of the survey respondents. Such issues as the need for greater regulation of foreign investment in the Alberta economy, the need for more local management of our resources ,the decreasing quality of education, etc. were all rated very low and in most cases were not even chosen by 1% of respondents. The Alberta New Democratic Party has throughout its history continued to emphasize issues and particular positions that do not appear to meet the real concerns of the "average" citizen. As well, a number of studies have indicated that a substantial number of Alberta voters see the NDP as only representing a very limited cross section of the population, namely trade union membership and the working class.[109] For example, in the 1971 election study respondents were specifically asked "What party do you think represents trade union members? "Thirteen point two percent chose the Progressive Conservatives, 10.2% the Social Credit, 7.8% the Liberals and 48.8 the New Democratic Party. The labelling of the New Democratic Party as one that basically only represents the interests of unions and blue collar workers has been especially damaging given the fact that the majority of Albertans do not fall into either category and do not particularly look upon these groups favourably. [110] However when asked which Alberta political party represents farmers, 37.8% chose the P.C.'s, 37.6% the Social Credit, 2.6% the Liberals and 9.2% the NDP. When asked which party represents city people 46.2% chose the P.C.s while only 2.6% determined that the NDP best represented the urban constituency. Similarly when asked which political party represents pensioners and native Indians, only 8.5% and 10.0% respectively, of the sample decided that the Alberta NDP was that party. The implications of this for the party will be discussed in the following chapter in light of the changing demographic makeup of the province. Clearly the overall evaluation of the party program and its conduct of day to day affairs, are something less than overwhelming .On the contrary the evidence indicates that the party still lacks the confidence of the vast majority of the general public.

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[109] Jack Masson and Peter Blaikie "Labour Politics in Alberta" in C. Caldarola Society and Politics in Alberta Op cit. Pages 271-283.
[110] The sum of the percentages does not necessarily total 100 do to the fact that a number of people did not know or did not answer the question.

Obviously, one of the major ways in which a political party can suffer electoral failure is to support positions on an issue or series of issues which are far from the mean of voter preference.[111]In the case of the NDP in Alberta, this argument, I believe accounts for a great deal in the lack of a major electoral breakthrough. One component of this negative perception of the party's performance that should not be ignored is that implicit in many of the NDP's policies and programs there is a rather centralist orientation. T. Levesque and K. Norrie found that the Alberta NDP has consistently been regarded as a "centralist" party, whose proposed economic planning reforms imply the need for a strong central government.[112] As a result the NDP really only appeals, at least in regards to this aspect of federal-provincial relations, to those few Albertans who support that more political power be exercised by the federal government.

In order to examine aspects of western alienation more thoroughly, [113] Gibbins conducted a survey on aspects of

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[111] T. Levesque and Ken Norrie Op cit.

[112] Terrence Levesque and Ken Norrie Department of Economics, University of Alberta, 1977. Overwhelming majorities in the Alberta Legislature Paper Presented at the Symposium on Society and Politics in Alberta in Edmonton April 30, 1977.

[113] Roger Gibbins, Department of Political Science Unversity of Calgary Western Alienation and the Alberta Political Culture Paper presented to the Symposium on Society and Politics in Alberta Edmonton, April 28 -30 1979.

Alberta's political culture and the role of political opposition. Specifically,he looked at that aspect of Alberta political culture that Macpherson referred to as a "tolerance for one-party government",in order to determine the public sentiment towards political opposition. He found that 82.5% of those people polled agreed with the statement that "democracy is weakened if the opposition parties become too small,.[114] However, he also found that 72.5% of respondents agreed that in disputes between Alberta and the federal government the opposition parties should pull together with the provincial government. His basic conclusion was that western alienation does not devalue the role of the political opposition across the board, but only its position in federal-provincial disputes.[115] The fact that federal-provincial conflicts have increasingly played a large role in Alberta politics has contributed to a situation whereby the NDP and Social Credit have found themselves in a very difficult political position. To object to the stand taken by the Progressive Conservatives has frequently resulted in the opposition being portrayed as not acting in the best interests of the province. Peter Lougheed has managed to link his government to the ambitions of the new entrepeneurial class in the province, and the widespread popularity this strongly provincialist position implies.[116] In contrast the NDP, both at the federal and provincial level, has supported the position of the federal government in regards to certain aspects of federal provincial relations and the need for greater governmental intervention in the Canadian economy. These positions have not done much to enhance the popularity and support for the party. This was particularly evident in the 1975 election when the NDP came out in support of an oil price freeze. The fact that virtually the entire provincial election campaign was focused on the federal/provincial oil pricing dispute, imposition of an export tax and petrochemical plant locations, put the NDP on the defensive throughout. [117] The fact that the Conservatives are able to identify themselves with the "interests of the province" put the NDP in a position of having to criticize the policies and positions of the Alberta government while not appearing to weaken Alberta's hand in dealing with federal government. Any criticism of the Lougheed administration is then said to be not in the best interests of the province.

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[114] Roger Gibbins "Western Alienation and the Alberta Political Culture" in C. Caldarola Op cit. Pages 147 -168.
[115] Ibid Page 26.

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[116] L. Pratt and J. Richards "Alberta Incorporated: The Politics of the New West" in Last Post Volume 5 No. 3 February 1976.

[117] Ken Norrie suggests that the prairie provinces have always contended that Confederation, the National Policy, and most of the subsequent economic policies of successive federal governments were designed by and for Central Canada. Disputes between Alberta and Ottawa is in no way a recent phenomenon. Ken Norrie _Western Economic Grievances: An Overview with Special Reference to Freight Rates_ Paper Presented to the Workshop on the Political Economy of Confedertion Kingston:Ontario November 8 - 10, 1978.

> Evidence from the activities of the Social Credit in the 1930s and the exploitation of Alberta-Federal disputes by the Conservative party in 1975 suggests that there is partisan advantage for governing parties to create tension between the two level of governments.[118]

The Alberta NDP has suffered from its identification with policies that on occasion have contradicted public opinion. Specifically the party has called for more not less federal involvement in key sectors of the economy.

The historically rather conservative political attitude of much of the rural and new immigrant population and the widely held perception of the CCF as a radical leftist organization, precluded a wide segment of the electorate from actively supporting the party during its formative years. Horowitz's comment that the brand of socialism espoused by the Alberta CCF was such as to make the British Columbia CCF seem mildly liberal adds substance to the argument that the public view of the party as extremist was in some ways justified. The public image of the Alberta NDP as rigid and left-wing has been sustained throughout its two decades of existence. There is no question that the radical socialist farm-labor orientation of the CCF, as enunciated in the Regina Manisfesto has been dramatically altered in the somewhat less dogmatic program of the NDP. Nevertheless the fact that the party has come out of a series of major intra-party ideological conflicts more determined than ever to reaffirm its basic social democratic orientation suggests that the party philosophy does play a substantial role in the conduct and formulation of policy. The presentation of material on the issues and strategies the NDP has chosen to highlight in the 1979 election campaign demonstrates this. The major consequence of this situation however, is that much of the electorate see the NDP as a doctrinaire socialist party. The inability of the party to alter this negative perception continues to be the single most important impediment to its achieving greater electoral success. Alberta's political reality does indicate that a political movement has difficulty in achieving major electoral success unless it is willing and capable of developing pragmatic policies and an effective organizational structure. In this regard the NDP must successfully come to grips with a number of critical areas of concern. Specifically, it will have to decide whether it will provide workable solutions to the critical problems facing the province, in areas such as housing, education and transportation or whether it will continue to support positions that maintain its ideological "purity" at the expense of attracting widespread support. If the party is to improve its public image and therefore its electoral position it will have to adopot the former course of action. Until the NDP succeeds in developing these types of characteristics for itself and its candidates it will continue to be an "also ran" in Alberta political affairs.

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[118] David K. Elton Alberta and the Federal Government in Historical Perspective, 1905-1977 in C. Caldarola Op cit. Pages 108-128.

Chapter Four: Socio-Economic Change and the Alberta NDP

"Political orientations are often strongly associated with the socio-economic characteristics of the population." [119] In the case of Alberta, rapid and far reaching changes have taken place in both the economy and in its social makeup. This chapter will begin with an examination of the changes that have taken place in the economy in terms of its moving from a rural agricultural base to a highly urbanized technologically sophisticated one, and the implications of these changes for the political sphere. The second part of the chapter will deal with the problems the Alberta New Democratic Party has had in attracting support from areas where it tradtionally has done relatively well, namely, unionized workers and the working class . The final section will examine possible ways the NDP may be able to benefit from the socio-economic changes that have and are taking place in the province.

The reorganization of the former CCF under the name NDP was an attempt to come to grips with the rather poor public image of the party and to strengthen the labour component of the party support. The new party hoped to broaden its appeal to the "liberally minded" elements of the middle class.

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[119] W. Rosenbaum Political Culture Op cit. Page 18.

> The objective was to create a party as closely identified with labour as the British Labour party, and at the same time prevent it from becoming a purely labour party.[120]

The failure of the Alberta NDP to achieve such a distinction is another contributing factor as to why the party has not been as electorally successful in Alberta as in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. [121] As well, the fact that the large rural agricultural base of Alberta has been more diversified has lessened the need for and acceptance of the "radical" economic measures advocated by the CCF/NDP. The policies adopted by the Alberta wing of the NDP help explain the party's lack of success when compared to its provincial neighbours. In Saskatchewan and Manitoba, the leadership of the NDP, particularly in recent years , conducted itself according to what Bailey would call "pragmatic" rules. It emphasized those programs and policies that would be publicly popular while downplaying those aspects of NDP philosophy that were of a more "unacceptable" nature. The Alberta NDP has historically chosen not to follow these examples (see Chapter 3). Instead it has tended to concentrate on maintaining integrity of principle and has as a result suffered at the polls.

The Transformation of the Alberta Economy

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[120] W.L. Morton Op cit. Page 202

[121] Morton argues that although highly dependent upon its agricultural base, Alberta had more natural resources than Saskatchewan and that coal, oil and natural gas provided a somewhat wider economic base.

During the period of the 1940s slightly over one half of the labour force in Alberta was engaged in forestry, fishing ,and agricultural industries. By 1951, this had fallen to 33 percent, by 1961 to 21.9%, and by 1971 this number had decreased to 12.9%. In 1971 approximately 51% of the Alberta work force was employed in trades, finance, insurance, real estate, public administration or non-government services. The Alberta economy has moved from one dominated by agricultural based industries to one where the trade and service sector and several industrial interests now play a prominent role.[122] As J.K. Masson and P. Blaikie mention "it seems that the province has skipped the industrial stage and moved almost directly from an economy dominated by a rural work force to one in which labour is primarily engaged in trade and services". This in combination with Premier Lougheed's stated policy of attempting to develop a large industrial base for the Alberta economy,suggests that an ever-increasing segment of the work force will be employed in occupations that are unionized.

Urbanization

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[122] Daniel Bell defines an industrial economy characterized by a large proportion of its population working in the service sector as "post industrial", Jack Masson and Peter Blaikie Page 276 Op cit. orginally found in Daniel Bell The Coming of the of Post Industrial Society (New York: Basic Books, 1973)

Concomitant with the decrease in the number of people involved in agriculture has been the increase in the number of individuals moving to the towns and cities.

> The city, represented by an alliance of business and professional elites, and led by a descendant of one of Alberta's ruling families now dominated the towns and farms.[123]

This rapid urbanization has resulted in an increase in the relative concentration of unionized workers in particular locations.

> In 1911 29.4% of the Alberta population lived in an urban area, in 1921 30.7%, 1931 31.8%, 1941 31.9%, 1951 47.6% 1961 63.3% and in 1971 73.5% of the population was urban.[124]

As the number of agriculturally based workers has declined the rural constituency has become a relatively weaker social and political force relative to other sectors of the society. [125] The successful attainment of political power is now largely determined in the urban ridings where the majority of Alberta voters reside. [126]

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[123] J. Richards and L. Pratt Prairie Capitalism Op cit Page 149.

[124] Source: Dominion Bureau of Statistics Census of Canada 1971, Volume 1 Part 1. Population, Geographical Distribution, Bulletin 1.1 Catalogue 92-709. Ottawa:Queen's Printer. The total population of Alberta in 1971 was 1,463,203.

[125] Donna M. Poetschke and Roberta E.McKown "Perceptions of Class in Alberta" in C. Caldarola "Society and Politics in Alberta" Op cit. Pages 193-205.

[126] From 1967 to 1979 the total number of seats in the Alberta legislature increased from 65 to 79. Of these 14 seats all were in urban areas. In 1971 when the number of seats was increased from 65 to 75, four additional seats were added in Calgary, five in Edmonton and Lethbridge was divided into two constituencies. In 1979 three seats were added in Calgary and two in Edmonton. Two rural constituencies Sedgewick-Coronation and Hanna Oyen was eliminated and largely replaced by Chinook. In terms of

[126] The implications of this change in distribution is particularly relevant for the New Democratic Party. The party generally does better in terms of popular vote in urban than in rural areas. As well, it receives substantially more votes in Edmonton than in Calgary. The reasons why the NDP receives more votes in Edmonton than Calgary are not totally clear. However the fact that Edmonton has a large number of blue and white collar workers represented by public service and private sector unions does suggest one possible answer. The NDP has traditionally relied upon unions and unionized workers for financial and organizational support. The dramatic increase in the number and concentration of workers in the urban areas does open up the possibility of the NDP developing a base from which to improve its electoral standing. [127]

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[126] (cont'd)urban-rural distribution , in 1967 there were 20 urban seats and 45 rural, in 1971 33 urban and 42 rural, 1975 33 urban 42 rural, 1979 38 urban 41 rural. Provincial Election Statistics 1967/1971/1975 for the Province of Alberta published by Better Government Programs of the Communication Department of the Alberta Teachers Association. August 1978 Pages 8 - 10.

[127] Of the eighteen provincial ridings in Edmonton, the NDP received twenty or more percent of the vote in twelve of them in the 1979 election. In Edmonton Avonmore the NDP received 23.76% of the votes cast, in Edmonton Beverly 34.87%, in Edmonton Calder 24.49%, in Edmoton Centre 27.17%, in Edmonton Goldbar 21.72%, in Edmonton Highlands 25.12%, in Edmonton Jasper Place 20.72%, in Edmonton Kingsway 29.59% , in Edmonton Mill Woods 20.94%, in Edmonton Norwood 38.12%, in Edmonton Parkallen 32.13%, in Edmonton Stratcona 39.59%. In Calgary the NDP did not receive twenty percent of the vote in any constituency. As well, there is something of a north/south split in support. The NDP does substantially better in northern Alberta than in the south. Its only victory was in SpiritRiver/Fairview which is in northern Alberta.

Industrialization

Since the Alberta NDP has historically been closely identified with the interests of unionized workers specifically and the working class generally ,the questions that I believe require an answer are: why has the party so far been unable to attract more support from these groups and what implications does the rapid transformation of the Alberta economy from one oriented to agricultural production to one dominated by oil and gas development and the trade and service sectors, have for potential NDP support.

One of the major reasons why the NDP has failed to gain wide support in Alberta is that organized labour has been relatively weak because of "labour transiency" [128] in the resource industries, and the lack of secondary manufacturing. The boom/bust cycle characteristic of many communities largely dependent upon a single resource or commodity for its economic well being, such as coal, gold or, as is the case in parts of Northern Alberta, oil and gas development, has contributed to a situation whereby workers come into an area for a given period of time, exploit whatever employment opportunities are available, and then move on to the next site. Many of the "roughnecks" on the drilling rigs regularly move from one location, company or even country to another, once again depending upon the likelihood of finding employment. The nature of resource exploration and development is such as to encourage mobility of the work force. The lack of permanency of location and employment is a factor that should not be overlooked when examining the issue of why Trade Unions have had some real difficulty in organizing Alberta workers. [129]

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[128] H. Palmer and T. Palmer "The 1971 Election and the Fall of Social Credit in Alberta" in Prairie Forum Volume 1 Number 2 November 1976. Page 131

Another component of the problem is the fact that the province historically has been economically dominated by an industry that is not readily attractive to unionization, namely agriculture. The independent commodity producer who for decades produced a very substantial proportion of Alberta's gross provincial product has not been a very receptive audience for union organizers. The free-enterprise, individualistic orientation of much of the rural community is philosophically about as far away from the "leftist" orientation of much of the trade union movement as any group in Canada. The fact that this rural preponderance is changing dramatically and the urban voter now predominates presents the NDP with some opportunity for the future. It remains to be seen whether the party can take advantage of it.

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[129] The latest example of this difficulty has been the repeated failure of the Energy and Chemical Workers Union to certify the workers at the Syncrude Plant in Fort McMurray. As of December 1981 the union had failed three times to receive sufficient support from the workers to form a union. Both the consortium and the provincial government have expressed their displeasure at the union's attempt to organize the workers.

In their study of Alberta politics, A.J. Long and F.Q. Quo [130] discovered that even among those workers one would suspect of being most likely to support the NDP only a small percentage actually indicated that they did. Of the total number of respondents who said they voted,

> 9.8% of skilled workers, 3.2% of agricultural workers, 6.7% of sales workers stated that they voted for the NDP.[131]

Supporting this finding are data collected from the 1971 Alberta Provincial Election Study.[132] The results of this study indicated that there were only very slight differences between members of trade unions and the general population in regard to voting behaviour and political attitudes. Alberta workers are by and large conservative in their political attitudes particularly when compared to their counterparts in British Columbia. The relatively long period of economic prosperity that has characterized this province up until very recently has contributed a high standard of living for many workers with little political struggle to attain it. I believe this has tended to weaken trade union support for the NDP in Alberta.

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[130] A number of studies have been done on the Alberta electorate and the distribution of voter support among the federal political parties. Some of the notable of these include: Robert A. Alford, "The Social Basis of Political Cleavages in 1962", in Papers on the 1962 Election, John Meisel ed (Toronto:University of Toronto Press, 1964) pp. 203-234; S. Peter Regenstreif, "Some Aspects of National Party Support in Canada", Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science, XXIX, No. 1 (February, 1963) pp 59 - 74; and W. Gagne and Peter Regenstreif , "Some aspects of New Democratic Party Urban Support in 1960" (November 1967) Pages 529 -550.

[131] J.A. Long and F.Q. Quo "Alberta:One Party Dominance in Canadian Provincial Politics Martin Robin ed. (Scarborough,Ontario :Prentice-Hall, 1972) Page 20.

[132] This study was conducted just after the 1971 provincial election in Alberta. The principal investigator was Dr. R.E. Baird of the Department of Political Science University of Alberta

> 58% of the union members polled said that they voted for the Progressive Conservatives in the 1971 provincial election, in comparison, 59% of the general population said they voted for the Conservatives.[133]

Of those individuals who said that they voted for the New Democratic Party, fifteen percent were union members as compared to eight percent of the general population. Clearly the NDP has relatively more support among unionized workers than among the general population. Nevertheless, the major problem for the NDP is to explain and rectify the reasons why only 15% of unionized workers supported the party in 1971. The confusion surrounding the question why the NDP has not done better in regard to support from the trade unions is further complicated by the fact that the 1971 survey data demonstrated that a very substantial proportion of the electorate see the NDP as the party which best represents the interests of the trade union members. Fifty-nine percent of the general population and 66% of union members expressed just such a view.[134] The apparent conflict between actual voting behaviour of union members and their preference for the NDP as the party that is most concerned with protecting workers' interests comes to the very heart of the failure of the Alberta New Democratic Party to win more than two seats in the Alberta Legislature.

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[133] Jack K. Masson and Peter Blaikie "Labour Politics in Alberta" in C. Caldarola Op cit. Page 278.

[134] Ibid Page 279

One should not overlook the fact that "among the components of the Alberta political culture is a strong belief in the spirit if not necessarily the practice of free enterprise, a concommitant belief in the desirability of a small fiscally conservative government and a tolerance if not an affection for one-party government."[135] The Protestant work ethic and the belief that the individual is responsible for his own success and failures and should not depend upon assistance from government is still quite prevalent. The criticism of the CCF/NDP as a "class party" and labour political action as an infringement of workers' democratic rights appears to be one example of this highly individualistic attitude directed toward political and social affairs. This aspect of Alberta's political culture remains an important impediment to the NDP capitalizing on the large numbers of workers who are union members in this province.

Jack Masson and Peter Blaikie put forward the argument that there are three possible explanations for the contradiction between voting behaviour and political attitudes on the part of union members. The NDP may have been rejected as a viable political force in this province due to inadequate leadership and direction from the top. Alternatively the party may have been perceived as being so weak that a vote for it was largely a waste. Finally, they suggest that the union members did not identify with labour and its normally progressive position on social and economic issues. [136] The results of the 1971 survey indicate that each of these factors very probably played some role in the lack of support of union members for NDP candidates. However it is our contention that there is one underlying feature that has not been dealt with in Blaikie's and Masson's analysis. The fundamental factor which has contributed to the circumstances whereby organized workers and the trade unions themselves have come only to play lip service to the NDP has to do with the position the party has historically taken on a number of issues. As previously mentioned , the CCF/NDP has been perceived , even by its most likely source of support, the working people of the province, as an organization controlled by a "radical element", which does not meet the real concerns of the average citizen. Many of the proposals put forward by the party were seen to be unworkable and unrealistic. Party supporters are seen to be either "activists" or trade union leaders. Consequently the CCF/NDP has suffered from a decidely negative public image. "There is no question that the labor movement in this province and across the country has not enjoyed a decent public image, we realize it and are working on it." [137] The Alberta NDP may have toned down some of the rhetoric of the

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[135] Roger Gibbins Western Alienation and Alberta Political Culture paper presented to the Symposium on Society and Politics in Alberta, Edmonton, April 28-30, 1977.

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[136] Ibid Pages 275 -283.

[137] E. Sentes, Secretary Treasurer Alberta Federation of Labor, in an interview February 8, 1982.

1930s and 1940s, and moved closer to the other political parties on particular issues. Nevertheless, it still is markedly more "social democratic" than its political opposition in the province. In this regard Masson and Blaikie's speculation about the trade union support is of some real interest: "If organized labour's members were politically cohesive, labour would be a substantial political force in Alberta."[138]

Opportunities for the Future

There is no question that the picture we have painted regarding the NDP has not been a favourable one; however, there are possibilities that this negative situation can be turned around. Grant Notley is providing solid leadership, and he has surrounded himself with a competent hard working staff. "The 1979 campaign was the best organized and coordinated campaign we have ever run. If it were not for the disappearance of Liberal and Social Credit support in Edmonton and northern Alberta the NDP would have won many more seats." [139]

The reason the fortunes of the Alberta NDP may be able to be improved is partially the result of the profound changes that are taking place in the province in terms of social, economic and general demographic characteristics.

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[138] J. Masson and P. Blaikie OP cit. Page 277.

[139] T. Brook Party Secretary of the NDP and former-campaign coordinator 1979.in an interview February 9,1982

The urbanization, unionization and secularization of Alberta society is taking place at an unprecedented rate . By 1971, 51.2% of the Alberta work force was employed in trades, finance, insurance, real estate, public administration, or non-government services.[140]The development of the oil industry, the building of mega-projects in northern Alberta, the expansion of the trade, service and financial sector have all contributed to a situation whereby organized workers are playing an increasingly large part in the conduct of the Alberta economy. The lack of labour militancy that has characterized much of the province's history is to a certain degree beginning to change. Recent strikes by government employees in violation of provincial statutes, and the bitter disputes the Calgary teachers and Alberta nurses have had with their respective employers,were largely due to the fact that the Alberta provincial government did not see fit to provide sufficient funding to hospitals and school boards to meet operating costs. If the Lougheed Administration maintains its rather negative attitude towards labour unions, as evidenced by its anti-strike provisions applied to civil servants, and its poor record in enforcing worker safety regulations , the likelihood of political opposition developing is enhanced. The NDP clearly has an opportunity to take advantage of labour's dislike of the Progressive Conservatives both in terms of electoral and financial support. "This is without question the most anti-labour government in the country. The time has come for a change".[141] As well, the recently buoyant Alberta economy has attracted a large number of skilled tradesmen to the province seeking jobs. Many of these people are represented by the major trade unions, who theoretically support the NDP. There is no question that a substantial proportion of these skilled workers are now very well paid and therefore not likely to support proposals calling for greater taxation of high income groups, and more social programs for the poor as suggested by the NDP. With a few notable exceptions, the Alberta trade union movement has not been at the forefront of radical political change in the province. As the 1971 data indicate a majority of unionized workers supported the Progressive Conservatives. This is not atypical, particularly when one looks at the relative conservatism of North American trade unions as compared to their European counterparts. The fact still remains that a continuing downturn in the economy will likely result in greater support for the pro-labour position of the NDP.[142]

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[140] J. Masson and P. Blaikie op cit. Page 276.

The implications for the New Democratic Party are at least not completely negative. The increasing perception of the Conservative government as one that does not respond to the demands of the people , opens the door for an effective opposition to come forth and present a clear alternative to the current regime. There is some indication that the NDP led by Grant Notley may have some chance of fulfilling this role simply because the other opposition parties are in such poor organizational and financial shape. . The Alberta Social Credit is largely a spent force. Its attempt to attack the Lougheed administration from the "right" has been something less than successful. The replacement of Bob Clark as leader of the party by former Calgary mayor Rod Sykes' and then Sykes resignation a year later has caused severe divisions in the party's already depleted ranks.[143] The federal Liberal party is so unpopular in the West that its provincial counterpart stands very little chance of becoming a substantial political force in the near future. In regard to the new political force in the province, the Western Canada Concept Party, its support is almost totally based in rural southern Alberta. The fact that it currently does not enjoy much of a following in the urban areas suggests that its potential for attaining power is limited. Goddard and Elton's [144] found that Notley was relatively successful in developing a positive image among certain of the electorate who otherwise viewed his party and the local NDP candidates negatively.[145] However, the one striking conclusion in this regard is the fact that the overall negative impact of the party upon the Alberta voter in the 1971 election was of such a "magnitude as to suggest that radical and extensive changes in perceptions among a majority of the population will have to take place" before the party can hope to challenge the Progressive Conservatives.[146]

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[141] Harry Kostiuk President, in an address to the 1981 AFL convention.

[142] The results of a Gallup poll taken in December 1981 indicate at the national level that the NDP has picked up support from both the Liberals and the Progressive Conservatives. The respondents indicated that the lack of action in regards to rectifying the problems of high unemployment and inflation were the two major reasons why they switched away from the two major parties.

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[143] On March 12, 1982 Rod Sykes announced that he was resigning as leader of the party.

[144]study David K. Elton and Arthur M. Goddard "The Conservative Takeover 1971 -" in C. Caldarola Op cit. Pages 49 - 70.

Only two NDP candidates have been elected to the provincial legislature since the formation of the NDP. Garth Turcott was elected in the Pincher Creek-Crowsnest constituency in a byelection held in 1966. [147] The only other NDP representative who has been successful in presenting himself as a viable alternative is Grant Notley the leader of the provincial NDP since 1968. He has been elected in the largely rural and small business constituency of Spirit River-Fairview, three times. In the provincial election held in 1971 Notley won by 154 votes, in 1975 by 99 votes, in 1979 by 689 votes over Progressive Conservative opposition.[148] Notley has a reputation as a hard-working, sincere and able critic of the government. He has accomplished this by concentrating on issue areas where the government has performed poorly. Rather than offering doctrinaire programs he has provided viable alternatives that meet the day to day concerns of many Albertans. "People are not looking for fundamental reform but for solutions to the damnable problems confronting them at the moment."[149] In the 1971 election study respondents were asked what they liked about Notley. Thirty-one point one percent of those who answered the question chose some positive characteristic; this is a rather dramatic improvement over the 92.9% who could not think of anything non-negative to say about the party generally. In regard to specific beneficial qualities possessed by Notley, such features as "strong and competent, well intentioned with an overall positive public presentation" were the major ones mentioned. When asked to rate Notley on a scale from 0 to 100, 67.1% of respondents rated him at 50 or more. This compares very favourably with the 76.2% rating for Peter Lougheed. The rather sharp contrast between the evaluation of the provincial leader and the rest of the party does offer some potential for improvement. The fact that his public image elicits substantially less negative opinion suggests that he is doing something "right". What he is doing is attempting to downplay those positions where the party is far out of line with the general electorate, and concentrating on

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[145] Ibid Page 49.

[146] Ibid Page 59.

[147] He lost the seat in the provincial general election of the following year. This riding was dominated by the coal mining industry, which is relatively highly unionized, but even here the party could not retain a large enough base of support to elect an NDP candidate.

[148] In 1975 and 1979 provinical elections Grant Notley's riding of Spirit River/Fairview had the distinction of having the highest electoral turnout, 79.8% and 80.8% respectively.

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[149] Dr. Ivor Dent in a speech to the Alberta NDP Third Convention. Dr. Dent was provincial president of the party at the time. He went on to become mayor of the city of Edmonton.

providing a realistic alternative. The fact remains however, that the NDP still does support policies and positions that put it on the far left of the Alberta political spectrum. This characteristic of the party separates it from its political opponents and has contributed to the situation where it is still viewed as unacceptably dogmatic by a large segment of the electorate. [150]

"The growing urbanization of the province, an increase in general educational levels and movement of women permanently into the work force, points to an increasingly accurate perception of socio-economic status in the near future." [151] The remnants of the past rural domination will continue to be diminished as the population continues to identify with the urban environment . As Poetschke and McKown state the implications of this are predominantly in the realm of the party system.

> If socio-economic interests (as at least a modified form of class consciousness) becomes more relevant and politically salient, then expression in a dominant one-party system may eventually become increasingly difficult and an opposition party may find a meaningful place for itself.[152]

The socio-economic and demographic changes that are occurring throughout the province of Alberta appear to provide the Alberta New Democratic Party with the opportunity to achieve some degree of electoral success.

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[150] Grant Notley interview September 18,1981. Mr Notley stated his desire to see the Alberta New Democratic Party become the official opposition in the province after the next election.

[151] D. Poetschke and R. McKown Op cit. Page 202.

[152] Ibid Page 201 - 202

Chapter Five: Conclusion- The Future of the Alberta NDP

The Alberta New Democratic Party has been a major disappointment to a number of those individuals and organizations who have worked to build the party, at the constituency level, into a viable political force. [153] This thesis has set out some of the factors that have contributed to the failure of the Alberta New Democratic Party to achieve greater electoral success.

Using Rosenbaum's political culture typology as the basis for the organization of the analysis, the argument has been made that a conservative socio-political philosophy has predominated in Alberta since the early decades of the twentieth century. This generally right wing orientation to socio-economic and political affairs has been in rather sharp contrast to the leftist ideology of the NDP. The conflict between the ideological predisposition of the party and the conservative political culture of the province has been one of the major reasons why the party has so far managed to survive without electoral success.

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[153] In 1971, the party had constituency associations in every riding in Alberta, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. It had no associations in the four constituencies of Prince Edward Island, 8 out of 10 in New Brunswick, and 40 out of 74 in Quebec. Average membership per organized constituency was 30 in Quebec, 36 in Newfoundland, 37 in New Brunswick, 118 in Nova Scotia, 147 in Alberta, 281 in Ontario, 508 in British Columbia, 548 in Manitoba, and 2,059 in Saskatchewan. N.H. Chi and G.C. Perlin "The New Democratic Party: A Party in Transition" in H.G. Thorburn ed. Party Politics in Canada Op cit. Page 187.

Political culture can be defined in two ways depending upon the level at which we want to study political life. If we concentrate on the individual, political culture has a fundamentally psychological focus. It entails the crucial ways in which a person is subjectively oriented towards the essential elements in the political system. The second definition refers to the collective orientation of people toward the basic components of politics. We are interested in how large masses of citizens evaluate their political institutions and officials. In the case of Alberta it is evident that the unique set of circumstances that occurred during its early historical development had a marked impact on its political culture. The large number of immigrants who settled in the province brought with them an existing set of orientations to the political system, the remnants of which, still are evident. The socio-economic conditions that prevailed after the Second World War also contributed to the manifestation of certain attitudes and beliefs that were conducive to conservative political philosophies as is indicated by the 36 years of Social Credit government followed y domination by the Progressive Conservatives.

In order to get a more precise understanding of the term political culture and how it can be operationalized it is necessary to set out the fundamental influences upon it. The four dimensions used by Rosenbaum to look at the role of political culture and its development include: political socialization, historical experience, socio-economic and political variables. Each of these factors was examined in the context of Alberta and were found to support the hypothesis that the province's political culture predisposed a substantial segment of the population to support the political right.

In regard to political socialization and historical experience, the findings in this analysis suggest that the unique set of geographic, social and economic forces in Alberta during its formative years were conducive to support for fundamental values and beliefs. The dramatic increase in population that took place during this period was largely the result of immigration. Many of these people held strong attachments to traditional orientations. This was particularly evident in the widespread appeal of fundamentalist religious organizations. Many of these early immigrants came from Eastern Canada and the United States and were of Anglo-Saxon ancestry. They brought with them a fundamentalist perspective in regard to socio-economic and political affairs. By the mid-1940s many of the new arrivals to Alberta were of European origin and they too manifest traditionalist attitudes. As well during this period the discovery of oil and natural gas was beginning to affect economic conditions in the province. A considerable amount of wealth was being generated and this was contributing to a situation in which people supported political philosophies that would maintain this prosperity. What Rosenbaum refers to as socio-economic variables also supported the argument tht Alberta's political culture was predominantly conservative. The economy of the province has moved from one where the rural agriculture sector dominated to one that is highly urbanized and technologically sophisticated. Historically,the independent commodity producer manifested a free-enterprise individualistic approach to social and political affairs that was clearly contrary to the collectivist social democratic philosophy of the CCF and the New Democratic Party. The fact that the province has enjoyed a long period of economic growth under a series of governments that support conservative economic policies has further alienated the NDP's left-wing ideological orientation from the vast majority of the Alberta electorate. The argument that the people would be better off socially and economically under an NDP administration has not been very convincing under these circumstances. Remnants of these value orientations are still very apparent, as is evident from an examination of responses to the 1971 Alberta provincial election study. An analysis of Rosenbaum's fourth category, political variables, as well clearly indicates that the NDP is an anomaly in Alberta provincial politics. Its left wing ideological program was seen as markedly out of step with the views of the majority of the respondents to the 1971 study. An analysis of the NDP's strategy and programs in election campaigns supports this conclusion. The social democratic philosophy of the party continues to stand in direct conflict with many of the political attitudes of a large segment of the Alberta population. This antagonism between the provinces predominantly conservative political culture and the ideological principles of the NDP has directly contributed to a situation whereby the party is viewed in a very negative light by much of the electorate. This unpopular perception of the NDP is further reinforced by the fact that the party continues to suppport issues that are not of primary concern to the public. This poor political strategy continues to impede the party's chances for improvement.

All four of the factors used in Rosenbaum's typology support the position that the political culture of Alberta reflects a right wing orientation to social, economic and poltical issues while the NDP's philosophy is demonstrably left wing.

The fact that there are relatively few quantitative data available on political culture in Canada generally, and Alberta specifically, provides an opportunity for future scholars. For example, a comparative study of the political attitudes and beliefs of Canadians on a province by province basis would help answer the question as to what are the intra- and inter- regional similarities and differences in the political culture of Canada.

What then of the future? If, as some have argued the ultimate goal of all political parties is the attainment of power, the lack of a major electoral breakthrough may become a self-fulfilling prophecy and thereby further reduce the NDP's appeal and base of support. However given the fact that the level of support for the party has remained relatively stable over an extended period, the likelihood of further decline is judged to be small. The chances of the party achieving immediate major electoral gains are, I believe limited. There are nevertheless a number of circumstances that can be exploited by the party which could lead to an expanded electoral base.

The socio-economic conditions in the province have changed dramatically in the last twenty-five years. Alberta politics are no longer dominated by the rural constituency; the five major urban areas, Edmonton, Calgary, Red Deer, Lethbridge and Medicine Hat, now control representation in the Legislature. "The growing urbanization of the province, an increase in general educational levels and the movement of women permanently into the work force point to an increasingly accurate perception of socio-economic status in the near future." [154] If these social and economic interests become more relevant and therefore more politically important, an opposition party of the left may be able to find a meaningful place for itself.

The pronounced increase in the rate of immigration of young people,both intra- and inter-provincially into Alberta's urban areas,also provides the NDP with potential support that has not previously existed. Progressive

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[154] D. Poetschke and R. McKown Op cit. Page 202.

Conservative backbenchers have met with increasing resistance to their party's position in meeting the demands of this rapidly expanding population. The government has been under fire for the lack of effective policies to deal with the major economic and social difficulties currently confronting the province. The Progressive Conservatives are caught in the position of not wanting to alienate that part of their support base that wishes the party to maintain its right wing position in social and economic affairs while trying to meet the demands of a rapidly expanding employed sector. Meanwhile the unequivocal stand taken by the NDP in calling for immediate improvement in the areas of housing, transportation and social services through immediate allocation of more economic resources has met with a great deal of public support.

The increasing militancy of government employees in particular and white collar workers in general could as well provide the NDP with a readily available source of organizational and financial support. This is an area where I believe the party could reap major benefits in a short period. This segment of the population has traditionally voted more conservatively, whether it be Social Credit or more recently Progressive Conservative. Given the increasing economic pressures many of them are now facing, the pro-labour position of the NDP could be of real interest to them. [155]

Another area where the NDP may be able to improve its chances for success is in terms of altering its campaign strategy. The Alberta NDP has consistently emphasized a series of social and economic issues throughout successive elections. For example, the party stressed such things as free dental care for children, government-run auto insurance and public ownership of all utility companies in both the 1971 and 1975 campaigns. The responses to the 1971 election study indicate that many of these concerns were not shared by the public to the same degree as by the party. NDP candidates were hammering away at issues that were considered largely irrelevant by much of the electorate. By refocusing its efforts into issue areas that meet the needs and concerns of the public more directly, I believe the NDP could improve its chances for victory.

Another circumstance that may work in the medium to long term to the advantage of the NDP in Alberta is the byelection victory in early 1982 of Gordon Kesler, a member of the Western Canada Concept party, in Olds-Didsbury. The Lougheed administration is now being attacked from the right for its handling of economic and social matters. If the government attempts to deal with these criticisms by taking a more conservative position on crucial issues, it could further alienate the urban consitituency and therefore provide an opening for the NDP.

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[155] "Margaret Ethier, President of the United Nurses of Albert , called on nurses to support the NDP because of Notley's championing their cause in the legislature." CBC radio interview March 11,1982.

If the New Democratic Party is to take advantage of these opportunities, it will have to come to grips with this basic question: is it willing to modify its image as a party made up of "radicals and trade unionists" and move somewhat more to the center of the political spectrum? Without electoral success the principles and policies espoused by the NDP will remain little more than footnotes in Alberta's political history. I am not arguing that the ideology of a political party is the only factor involved in the determination of political success or failure. Voter misperception, traditional social, economic and religious ties, leadership, and candidate appeal are all factors that influence political events. Yet, the adherence of the Alberta New Democratic Party to unpopular ideological positions has, as this study demonstrates, superseded the other factors in explaining the lack of electoral success of the party.

The political history of Alberta has been dominated by a succession of one-party regimes. Once the Progressive Conservative era comes to an end, Alberta voters can be expected to look for one viable alternative. For the NDP to achieve this status, it will have to become politically pragmatic and shed its ideological and therefore widely unacceptable image.

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